

Esquire

MAN AT HIS BEST
August 2015

PHILIPPINES



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SINK YOUR TEETH INTO OUR FOOD AND DRINK ISSUE.

COLEEN GARCIA SUCCUMBS TO HER GUILTY PLEASURES. JP ANGLO FEASTS ON LOBSTERS IN ISABELA. JEROME GOMEZ DIVES FOR UNI IN BACOLOD. KARA ORTIGA HUNTS FOR DOG MEAT IN BAGUIO. JOSÉ ANDRÉS REVEALS THE FUTURE OF FOOD. LUIS KATIGBAK SAYS GOODBYE TO FAST FOOD. AND RICKY CARANDANG, WHO GUEST EDITS THIS ISSUE, GETS DRUNK ON TEQUILA. *BON APPÉTIT!*

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*ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A STEAK KNIFE TO THE CHEST*



→ **No one mentions gluttony** much these days. It seems to be almost like a solecism to drop the “G” word and evoke its specter during, let’s say, dinner conversation—most especially if you happen to be dining out in one of the many restaurants that have appeared over the past several years in the metro. (If certain studies are to be believed, more Filipinos are choosing to eat out over buying groceries.) As a nation that predominantly identifies itself as Roman Catholic and goes gaga over Pope Francis, we are all guilty of it. (To be sure, St. Thomas Aquinas listed stuff like “eating too eagerly” or “eating too soon” among others as enough grounds for the sin to be committed.) But why feel guilty about our transgression? They make life more enjoyable and that’s not such a bad thing anymore. The virtue now lies in moderating our excesses rather than restraining them. Or perhaps to get enough exercise to make sure our bellies don’t make them apparent.

Don’t get me wrong. I enjoy eating and going out to eat as much as everyone. But I stop at calling myself a foodie and be burdened by all its hateful connotations. In *The Official Foodie Handbook*, published in 1984, it declares (with tongue firmly-in-cheek) for us to “Be modern—worship food.” If this was satire back then, the irony is lost on us now. But if we accept that Filipinos don’t really get satire or irony (as is often been said) then the point is moot. Or is it? At a time when food has increasingly become the currency of popular culture, where chefs have usurped musi-

cians as rock stars or even fashion designers as being in vogue, I think it’s just right that we think before we eat and consider what we are actually putting in our mouths.

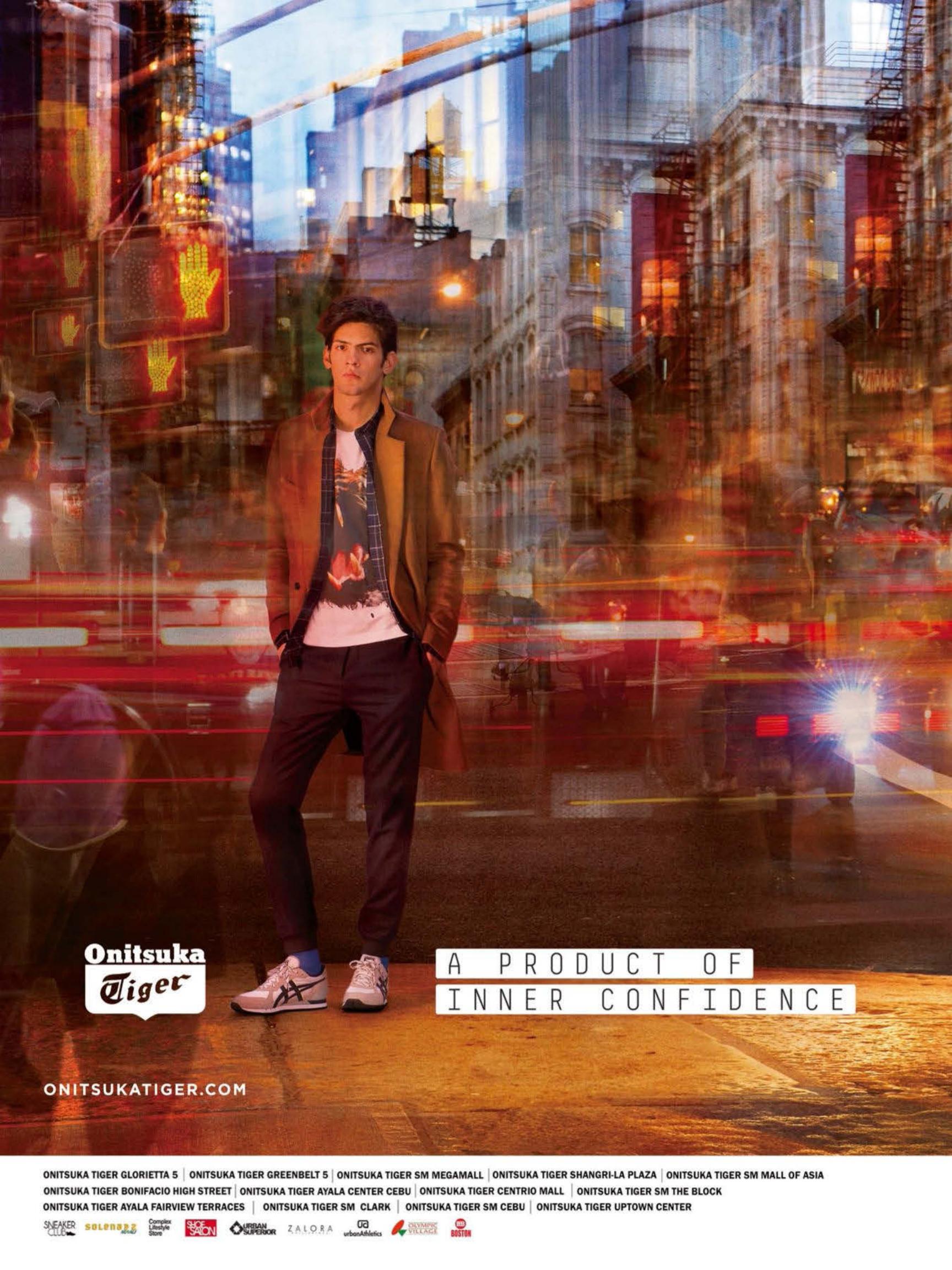
The stories in this issue are about that. Instead of going for fast food or picking what’s readily on the menu, we sent editors to go to three different places around the Philippines to not only taste everything that they could, but to actually engorge themselves on the localities themselves. There’s a story behind every bite and sip, and it’s those experiences that are being served up in these pages. In the process of cooking these stories up, we knew we wanted to do more than just satiate cravings. Rather, we wanted flavors to linger far longer than the last bite, so to speak. If we’re going for gluttony after all, might as well be smart about it and avoid indigestion.

Your meal is served.

This issue wouldn’t have been as satisfying to make if not for our guest editor Ricky Carandang, who describes himself an eater rather than a foodie, and Agriculture Undersecretary Berna Romulo-Puyat, whose passion for our local produce and cuisine inspired us in more ways than one. Both are very dear friends, the latter just also happens to be my sister. ■

— ERWIN ROMULO

*Lourd de Veyra’s answer to the question: What’s the fastest way to a man’s heart?



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↑ **KISSA CASTAÑEDA** is the Editor-in-Chief of Hong Kong's *Home Journal* magazine. Before that she was an editor in *Preview* magazine and *Elle Decoration*. She is also one of the brains behind the independent local travel guide, *Wander*. For this issue, she wrote the lexicon on the future of food.



↑ **DAN MATUTINA** is a designer and illustrator. His illustration style is a mix of handmade and digital, clean and dirty, old and modern aesthetics. His works have appeared in several leading international and local magazines. He co-founded design studios Ideals Creatives and Plus63 Design Co.



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↑ **GERIC CRUZ** is one of the most promising photographers at the moment, showing a unique eye in portraiture, street and fine art photography. His poignant visual essay "Second Star To The Right" was exhibited at the Delhi Photo Festival in 2013, and became a finalist in the prestigious Invisible Photographer Photo Essay Asia Award. Geric shot this month's story on Negros, his mother's hometown.



↑ **ARTU NEPOMUCENO** first attempted to become a chef, before realizing that he had no stomach for butchery. He graduated with a major in photography from the College of St. Benilde. Today, his works are published in *Garage*, *Scout*, and *Northern and Southern Living*. With the help of his mom, he put up a small ice cream sandwich shop called Louie-Luis. The profits of which go back to his craft.

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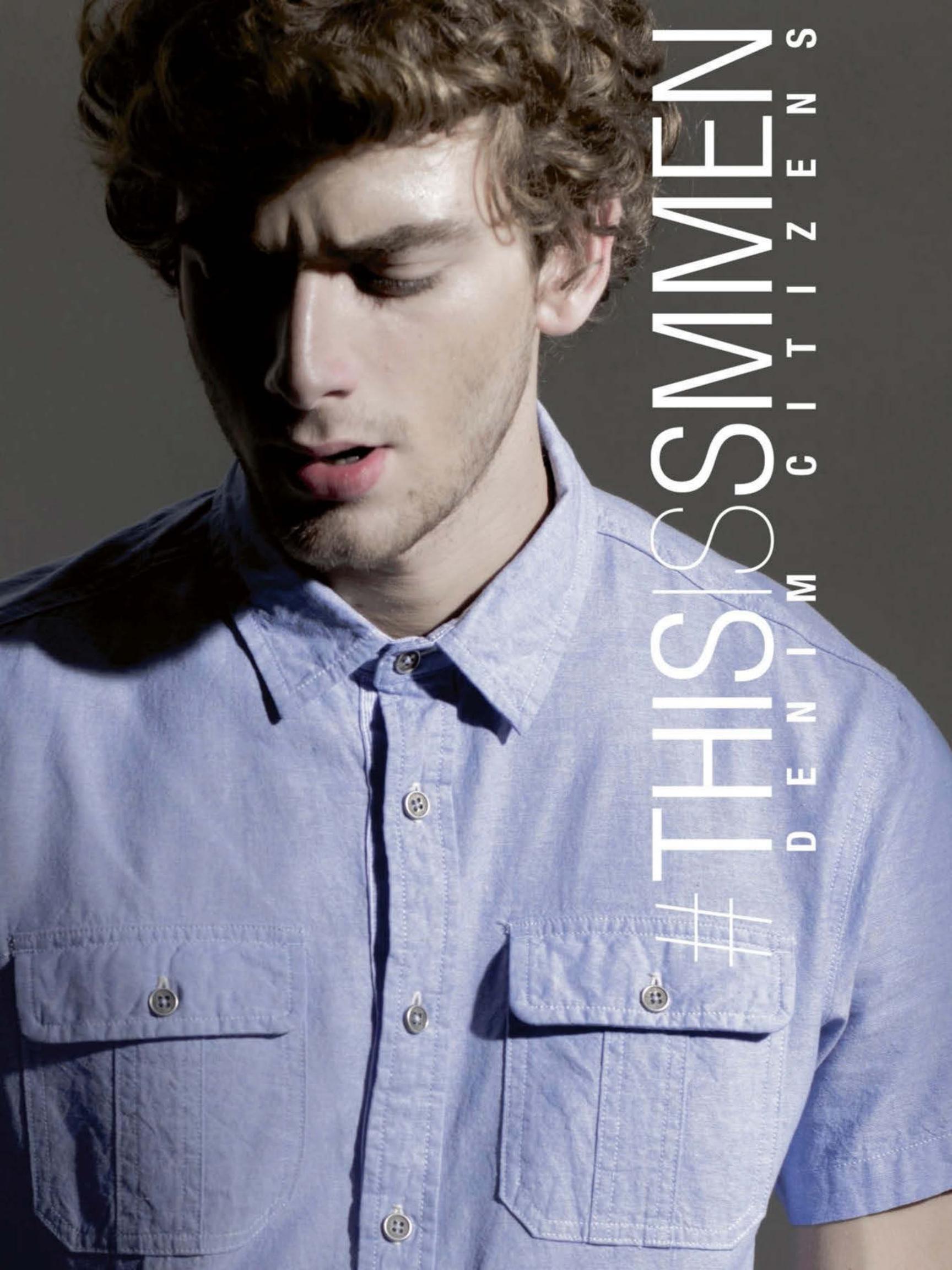
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Here's TO Dad



QUALITY TIME

THERE ISN'T A BETTER DAY IN A YEAR TO RAISE A GLASS TO YOUR OLD MAN THAN ON FATHER'S DAY

Last June 17, Esquire Philippines and The Proscenium at Rockwell held Here's to Dad—a salutation to the men who matter most: none other than our fathers.

It was a fitting way to celebrate Father's Day: an intimate dinner at the Kirov Showroom attended by fathers and their families. Cocktails

kicked off the festivities, followed by a sumptuous three-course dinner that included melon soup, Canadian beef tenderloin, and a chocolate demitasse.

As an extra treat for the dads, Lit Manila was behind the bar for the night, serving different sorts of aged Japanese whiskey, each a perfect match for the food

served. Tabacalera was present at the event for a tobacco rolling demonstration which fathers also gamely participated in.

Here's to Dad turned out to be a laidback yet upscale celebration and an excellent opportunity for dads to spend quality time with their families, gathered around good food.

MAN AT HIS BEST

AUGUST 2015



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MAN AT HIS BEST

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RONNIE DEL CARMEN

AT 29, RONNIE DEL CARMEN LEFT THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE US AND LANDED IN THE FIELD OF ANIMATION, WORKING AT DIC, WARNER BROS. ANIMATION AND DREAMWORKS, BEFORE JOINING PIXAR IN 2000. NOW HE IS CO-DIRECTOR OF PIXAR'S LATEST HIT, INSIDE OUT.

BY PHILBERT DY PHOTOGRAPHED BY TIM SERRANO

ESQ: How often do you make it back to the Philippines?

RONNIE DEL CARMEN: I try to make it back here every two or three years. There was a time when I didn't come back for 12 years. I was surprised by how much the place had changed. When I was here in 2004, I wanted to find out where Philippine animation was. I spoke at a lot of universities, and the industry showed up, and they talked about all their problems. It's just a tough industry to get into and maintain. The costs are really high.

ESQ: Why do you think Filipinos are so suited to work in visual industries like animation and comics?

RDC: I don't know. I've been wondering about that. I don't know what it is, but I do know in our past, we've used the arts as a means of expression without permission. It's one of those things about the culture: we'll make do with what we got. When I was a kid, I didn't think anything about drawing other than I liked to do it. I think it brings us joy.

ESQ: What made you think you should be in animation?

RDC: Oh, no. I never got to that point. I never thought I'd be making cartoons.

ESQ: So there isn't a seminal cartoon that made you want to get into the industry?

RDC: There are cartoons that I loved, like *Donald Duck* and *Popeye*, but I never aspired to do that. How could I? These were masters, and no one could teach me that stuff.

ESQ: That makes your journey seem downright insane.

RDC: It is insane. It was a long shot. I didn't go the States to get into animation. I was just looking for a job. If it was about drawing, that would be better. But I could have been a dishwasher, or making widgets on a conveyor belt. But people had confidence in hiring me for animation, even though I seemingly had no aptitude for it.

ESQ: It says in the press notes that you worked on the set of *Apocalypse Now*. How'd you manage that?

RDC: My sister had gotten a job at Hemisphere Pictures and she said, "I can get you in the art department." I didn't know anything about that, but she got me a slot in there.

ESQ: What did you do there?

RDC: I didn't even know what the movie was about, and I was the youngest member of the art department there. Nobody wanted to give me any work, because I didn't have any skills. And they

IT'S ONE OF THOSE THINGS ABOUT THE CULTURE: WE'LL DO WITH WHAT WE GOT.

had me doing signs in Vietnamese and painting insignias on jets out in the sticks just to get rid of me. I didn't know what I was doing. I was just happy to be collecting a paycheck.

ESQ: You've been working in



animation for a long time, and you were there for the transition between traditional hand-drawn animation and 3D. What was that like?

RDC: I saw *Toy Story*, and I marveled at how effective the story was. I wasn't looking at the 3D computer-generated imagery. The fact that I was so affected by the story and entertained by it made me feel like there was nothing to this CG vs. hand-drawn thing. Clearly you were able to tell a convincing, compelling and involving story with CG. It was clear that this was the

next thing we were going to do, no matter how difficult or costly it would be.

And while I was only trained in hand-drawn animation, as a story artist, my job wouldn't change. I'd still have to draw, whether it was 2D or CG. I wasn't as concerned about it as others were. I do lament the loss of 2D as a craft because that can't be taught anymore.

ESQ: But do you feel like there's some essential quality that's been lost with the decline of hand-drawn animation?

RDC: Yes. With

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hand-drawn animation, you are creating the world over with every cel stroke. In 2D, every redrawing of the character is making the character whole and new. The illusion of life is the aggregate of those thousands of drawings, creating the magic of performance. Not to say that 3D doesn't do something similar, but the hand-drawn—the pencil, the pen, the marking of that piece of paper—that is one of the most ancient and basic ways that we've communicated as human beings. With it disappearing from the forefront of storytelling, it feels like we're losing something very substantial.

ESQ: Have you considered working in TV, where 2D animation is having a resurgence?

RDC: Well, and I'm making a generalization here, a lot of those shows are the Saturday morning type. They're fun and jaunty, and tend to be pretty silly. And I've lived through all that in the earlier part of my career. It's not a mystery to me. I'm not inclined to tell stories that way. If I was inclined to tell a story in 2D, it would be more like a miniseries on Netflix, let's say. I want to craft an experience with characters that don't have to live and die on gags and wild activity. Maybe that will happen in the future, but I'm not pursuing it right now.

**DIRECTING IS AS MUCH
ABOUT DEALING WITH
THAT DISAPPOINT-
MENT AND WALKING
FORWARD ANYWAYS.**

ESQ: What does being a co-director on a Pixar movie entail?

RDC: The co-director job at Pixar has been a partnership in my experience. I get to perform what I'm good at with Pete [Docter].



When feelings have feelings: Pixar's new movie, *Inside Out*.

My facility is about being able to create visual, emotionally compelling experiences. I'm his partner as a storyteller. He would give me specific missions like "take care of the second act," or "do the opening of the movie." Or like, "find out what is the heartbreak of this character."

ESQ: Why do you think you were asked to co-direct?

RDC: Towards the end of making *Up*, Pete and I were working really closely. We got really familiar with how the other tells a story. Because I have that kind of shorthand relationship with Pete, it's a no-brainer that we work together on movies.

ESQ: Do you have plans on directing your own projects?

RDC: I have dreams of directing, just being so close to the throne. I aspire to it, but the directing job is not something that is given

lightly to anybody. I have my stories. Maybe the opportunity will come.

ESQ: So what is it that makes a good story artist? What separates a regular story artist from an award-winning story artist?

RDC: It's tough to say. I was given the job of storyboards just out of Bruce Timm telling me, "You're going to do storyboards." It was his call, and he liked my work enough that I got good at it. There are all sorts of things you can do to get better. You study film language. You study acting. I took acting lessons even though I'll never be an actor.

though I'll never be an actor. When you go into feature animation, the story artist is given the job of creating experiences wholesale. You are essentially the first writer of the movie. Anyone can block characters. But the mark of a good story

artist is making an audience feel something from just an image.

ESQ: So what new experiences have you actually gotten out of stepping up to the director's chair?

RDC: It's given me the ability to command a whole army of people with various disciplines. And it's given me the experience of having to weather misfortune, and having to continue leading those troops to the finish line. Making a movie is about disappointment. It's disappointment compounded over hundreds of people, a dozen departments, and the studio above you. Directing is as much about dealing with that disappointment and walking forward anyway.

ESQ: What is it like to create these characters, and to find them voices?

RDC: You kind of start with what you know. Once you have a solid idea of who the character is, you start going through your experiences and the movies you've seen, looking for that character's voice. Like when the character of Fear showed up, it sounded like Bill Hader. And there was no one that embodied Sadness until we heard Phyllis Smith. There's just a quality to her voice. And you end up writing for that actor: the way they clip their words, or how many breaths they take.

ESQ: What makes Pixar so different from the other places you've worked?

RDC: It's a director-driven studio. I'm very proud of saying that because I've worked in other studios where the seat of creating the movie's experience and characters lives in some other power outside of the director. I've stayed at Pixar for 15 years, and I can confidently say we are responsible for the experience that makes it on screen. I'm proud of all my work in other studios, but here, my investment is personal. 

CONTINUED



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The blue room:
Although handsome in its present state, Desiderata's bringing Eric Paras to see the interior to its completion.

food.” They found it in the classic 1927 Max Ehrmann poem “Desiderata”.

“It’s more than a poem—it’s a credo,” gushes Anton, who is general manager of the place. “It just basically talks about how you should handle things in your business and in your life...in Latin it means ‘things to be desired.’”

Just 15 minutes in Desiderata Lounge, and you’ll find those things can be found there: a carefully curated menu, classic cocktails with a twist, and a music volume level that leaves room for intelligent, sincere conversation.

The music is mostly ‘60s—Motown, blues, jazz—with the second floor slated to be an upscale vinyl dump of sorts for audiophiles.

The menu is by Chef Borja Duran from Spain, who trained in Michelin-star restaurants abroad before he came to the Philippines to set up the kitchens of Barcino. Later, he would set up those of Donosti Pintxos Tapas and The Green Sun, a boutique hotel in Makati.

Fusing his training and background with locally-sourced ingredients, Chef Duran has come up with novel, flavorful dishes such as the French-inspired

Ox Clouds, fried ox brains with black lumpfish caviar with a poached egg and konbu dip (the saltiness of the caviar and crunch of the breading is a great counterpoint to the fattiness of the dish); the Grilled Mojo Verde Oc-

GO PLACIDLY

AMID THE NOISE AND HAZE OF THE CURRENT NIGHTLIFE SCENE, A CHIC NEW JOINT AT BGC INVITES YOU TO LOUNGE AND CHILL. BY REGINA ABUYUAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY TAMMY DAVID

If you're up to your ears in the bass-thumping, mindless drinking club scene that's dominated Metro Manila's nightlife for the past several years, take heart: Desiderata Lounge in Bonifacio Global City will restore your

faith and have you grabbing your coat to head out and rediscover what a good night on the town should be.

Opened in March this year, majority of it is owned by Anton Zamora, 30, and his siblings

(who also own Basilio's Restaurant along Rizal Drive in the same area). Desiderata is their attempt at reinvention, to “build something that had a philosophy and direction rather than just being a restaurant and just serving

topus, a surprisingly sweet and tender octopus tentacle with chimichurri, homemade pickles, and potato foam; or the Braised Wagyu Lengua, so soft it almost melts in your mouth, paired with mustard and beet sauce (as good as steak, but not as heavy).

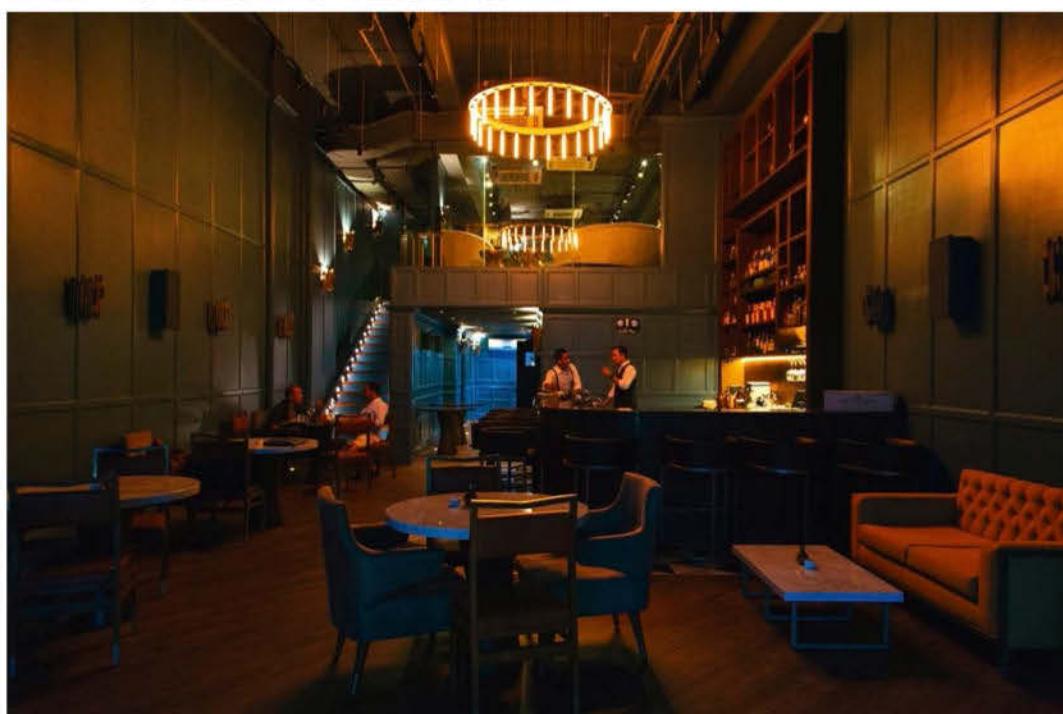
Los Angeles-based bartender Tim Walters, actress G. Toengi's husband, helped create the bar menu. It's got some winners, as well: its New York Sour, which uses Templeton Rye, is pretty as well as delicately-flavored—it's topped off with a tiny pink flower and malbec (red wine in a sour! Who knew?), which combines with the lemon to give it an even more refreshing finish. Desiderata's twist on the Old Fashioned, meanwhile, is made with Bulleit Rye and simple syrup—unlike the, er, old fashioned way, by muddling a sugar cube in the drink. Interestingly, using a syrup makes the drink taste smoother.

Anton's personal favorite is The Grenada, which uses Don Papa rum, the increasingly popular rum from Negros. More than the taste, it's the people and story behind it that makes the drink special, says Anton. "It's nice to know the history of what you're consuming."

Because ultimately, there must be more to partying and drinking than getting wasted.

"We're thinking maybe there's a different market; we're pretty sure people are tired of the noisy clubs...they want to talk, have a good meal, maybe get a cocktail after, and just enjoy the night," says Anton. "We're pretty sure there are people who want to see the difference and have a good time." ■

Desiderata Lounge is located at G/F Infinity Tower, 25th Street, Bonifacio Global City. It's open from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. Dinner service ends at 11pm, after which guests can order bar chow.



Clockwise from left: prepping the pulpo; a nook by the entrance; the New York Sour; the Grilled Mojo Verde Octopus; the lounge at night.



Private browsing:
Much more
discreet and no
loss of quality
upon rewatching.

ers meet and date in prison, but ex-white-collar felon and current felon and nonfelon consultant (oh, that's a real job; check LinkedIn) Justin Paperny thinks you should be quick about it, similar to how you were in prison. Indeed, dropping it before the wine is the most efficient and cost-effective way, but if you don't intend to break the law with your date—that is, if he or she isn't part of whatever heist or scheme you're currently planning—you might let it brew for a while. "To get that piece of information early on," says New York sex therapist Ursula Ofman, "will certainly be prejudicial and problematic." And I think at least one of those is illegal. (You'd know.)

When you do confess, I'd lead with the white-collar aspect of your crime, emphasizing its whiteness and crispness, and stressing any relevant details: Was it made-to-measure? On Savile Row, perhaps? How are the stays? Are they stiff? Do they taper? Your date's reaction should rise and fall in proportion to the value of the shirt. (There is a theorem that proves this, but it escapes me just now.) And though there's no law against withholding this information, I wouldn't wait too long. When she notices you eat with your arm around your food, she'll know something's up. 

Got a sex question of your own?
E-mail it to us at sex@esquire.com.

SEX WITH STACEY WOODS

ON THE DIMINISHING MARGINAL UTILITY OF PORNOGRAPHY IN MARRIAGE AND THE QUALMS OF AN EX-CRIMINAL WHO WANTS TO DATE AGAIN.

My wife and I watched porn together when we started dating, but we tried it the other night after eight years of marriage and it was totally awkward. Why would things feel so weird now?

My God, it's happened: You've progressed past porn. We've never seen this before. I mean, we've envisioned it, and theories abound about what might cause it—have you been eating too much kale? were you listening to NPR at the time?—but nonetheless it's fascinating.

My theory is that it has to do with the shape your lives have taken these eight long years: a sort of impenetrable, suffocating bell curve that does not allow porn or perhaps all joy to thrive.

In other words, your "sex life has dwindled," surmises feminist-porn pioneer Candida Royalle. (She surmised it, not me.) Aggressive research on both your parts is what she advocates until you find the kind of carnal entertainment that speaks to you. "Maybe you could even do like a Siskel-and-Ebert-type thing," she suggests. But I don't recommend that. I've played S&E before, and it can get pretty nasty. In case your wife lags on her end, you can pick up something or things you think she'll like. Remember that "the woman is going to be more—" says Royalle, breaking off before she says "annoying." "She wants a scenario, she wants context, she wants

to know why these people are together. It's a little more complex." So probably anything with Toni Collette is fine. Until then, you're free to view porn during your personal time or to disregard it entirely. Outside the San Fernando Valley, I don't think you're even required to watch it, and a small monthly gift to your local pornographer should alleviate any lingering guilt you might have.

At what point in the dating process should I disclose that I've done time in prison? It was for a white-collar crime, but still.

My advice is probably of no use here, since most of my read-

THINGS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE DISCLOSURE

Your middle name. → Your dream last night. → That you've never seen *Titanic*. → That the reason you've never seen *Titanic* is seeing Kate Winslet with someone else hurts you so. → That the porn you actually want to watch together is the *Titanic* parody. → That you're "totally sober. No, really." → A hangover.



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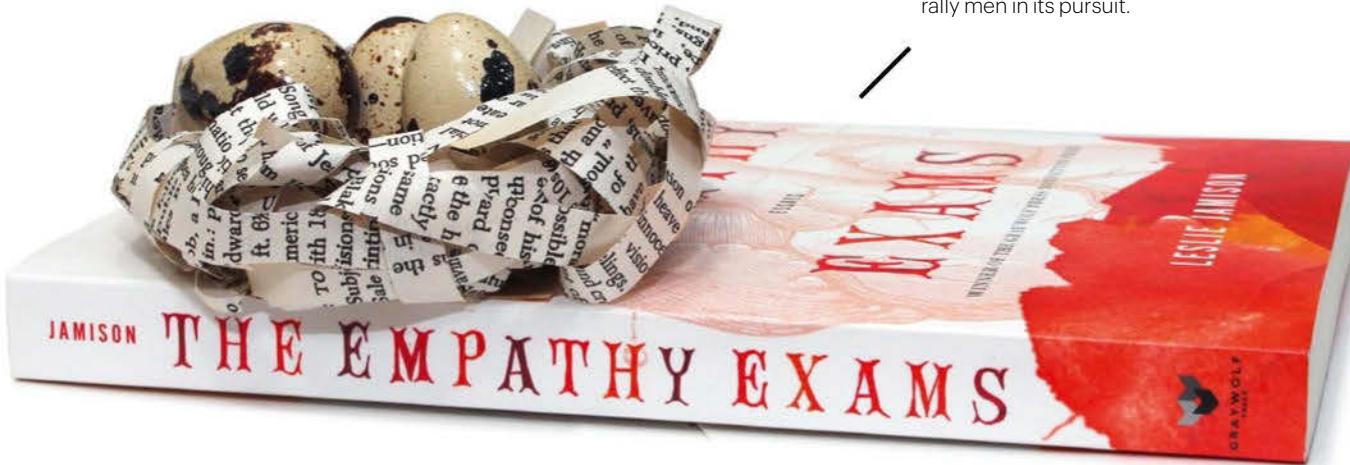
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BIRDS OF PREY

NONFICTION TAKES FLIGHT IN THESE REMARKABLE ACCOUNTS OF BEING HUMAN (OR AVIAN, AS THE CASE MAY BE.) BY SASHA MARTINEZ

It's befuddling at first glance, that a book about training a flying predator would be so acclaimed by many an impassioned reader. That doubt will only bring surprise and shatter jadedness—for Helen Macdonald has reinvented the memoir, nature writing, and the literary biography in her ***H is for Hawk***.

Macdonald seamlessly melds three seemingly disparate threads—the sudden death of her father, training a goshawk, and the life of author T.H. White—and creates a cohesive narrative where each element is essential to another. Her grief makes her turn into herself, and her hawk Mabel becomes a dubious lifeline; training Mabel has her reuniting with White's works, and uncovering his tortured inner life.

Clear prose outlines the art of falconry, and occasional fervent litanies magnify the sadnesses of both the author and the writer

she's stubbornly resisting an affinity with. What sentimentality the book contains is well-earned, having come to us from a world of great despair. When you read Macdonald's blunt, "The hawk was everything I wanted to be: solitary, self-possessed, free from grief, and numb to the hurts of human life," you don't pause and think of triteness. Instead, you understand that this is a person in the midst of an unraveling life, and you are rooting for her and the glorious bird of prey perched regally on her clenched fist.

The logical reading companion to this would be any of White's books, especially those already parsed in *H is for Hawk*. But if you are leery of redundancy (because you will have read that passage already), switch gears and pick up ***The Pilgrim Hawk*** by Glenway Wescott. It's a very short and very quiet tale of old friends and old hurts, of class and veneer, of love unrequited—

think Fitzgerald's Gatsby, but with a peregrine falcon looming in the corner of the glittery drawing room.

The essays of Charles D'Ambrosio, once in a limited edition pamphlet, have steadily grown a cult following characterized by the usual passing-on among friends. Their republication—in tandem with new work—in ***Loitering*** brings the pieces to a new audience. The essays are startlingly smart and diverse, marked with a respectful ambivalence that allows both subject and reader free reign.

The D'Ambrosio essays fall not-quite-neatly into three broad categories. One, analyses of social constructs and of contemporary phenomena: Defending a culture's right to eat whale, an uncomfortable profile of ready-made housing, a reluctant attempt at crime reporting whose lackluster nature is a story in itself. Two, the piercing examinations of a family life marked by mental illness and suicide, by reluctant and resigned love—a younger brother who killed

himself in the author's childhood room, another brother who botched a jump off a bridge, a father whose once hero-like persona only casts his current instability in stark relief. And, three, a mix and in-between, are D'Ambrosio's thoughtful and in-depth essays about literature, weaving together the academic and the deeply personal. In this last category falls "Salinger and Sobs," which holds modern classics fiction against the author's own troubled family dynamic, and rates as among the most affecting of the collection.

Leslie Jamison's breathtaking collection of essays has made its appearance here before—we chose it as among the top reads of 2014. But ***The Empathy Exams*** is the perfect complement to the D'Ambrosio: Both are strikingly intelligent, spanning a range of subjects that will intrigue even the most jaded reader, and both carry a gruff sensitivity—a strong if bashful heart—at their very core. ■

All books are available in Fullybooked.

ON PAGE 101...

He used to run this race, in days of better health, but never managed to finish it. Instead, he's managed to garner respect as a man of principle—a man so committed to the notion of pain that he's willing to rally men in its pursuit.

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A trellis of light oak wraps around the entryway of Japanese restaurant Inagiku. The design element continues into the new teppanyaki counter (far end) as well as hides the sushi bar (right) from view.



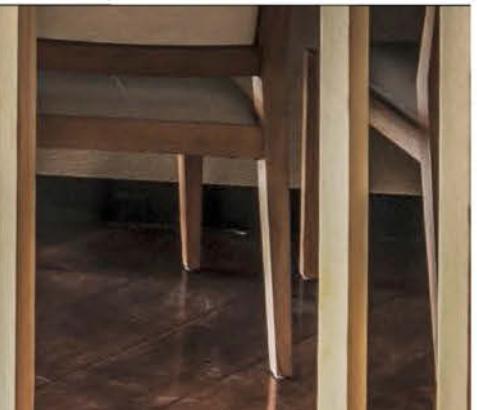
INTERIORS

A NATURAL STORY

THE ART OF WABI-SABI SEES THE TENDER BEAUTY IN THE FLAWED.

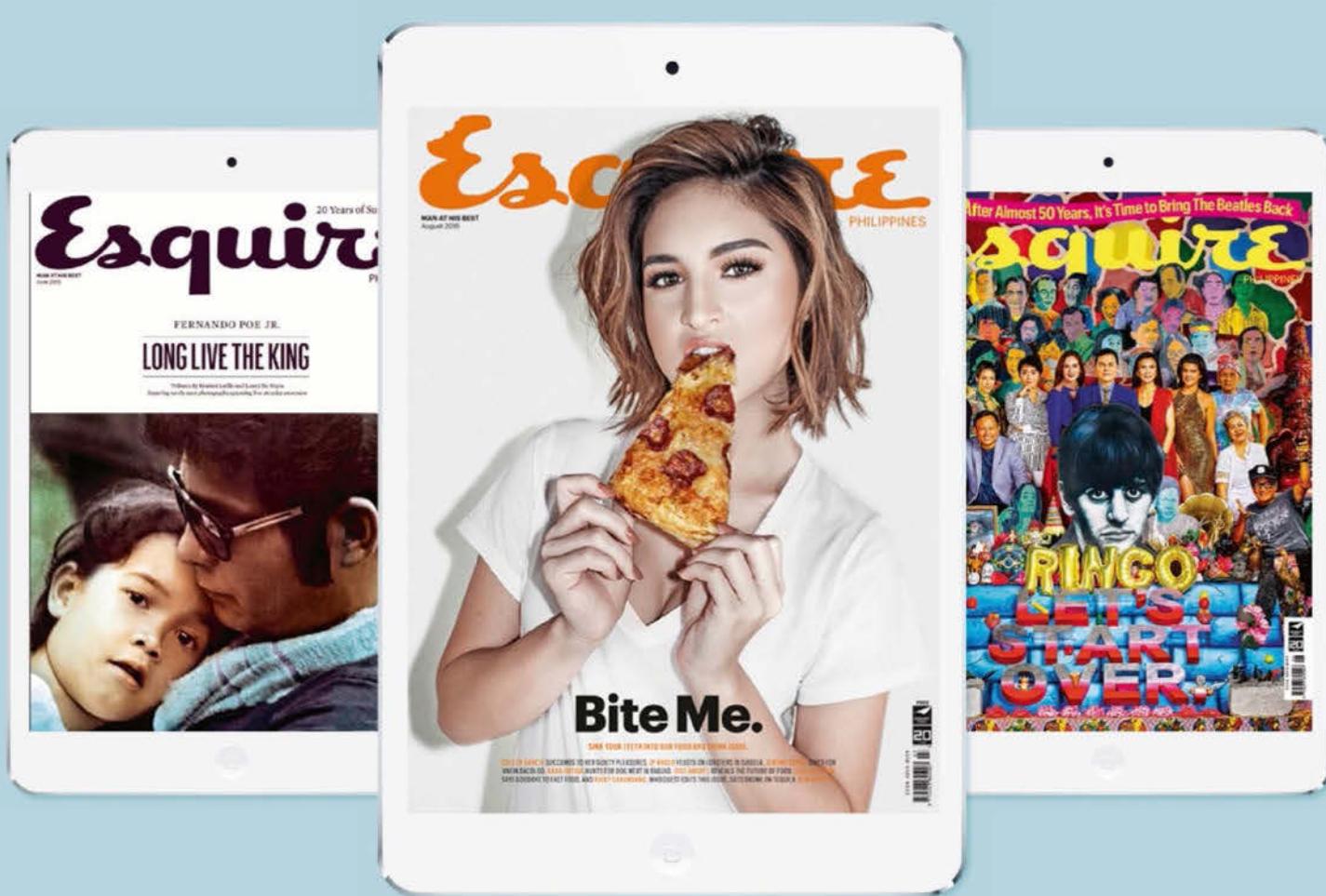
For a design refresh, Inagiku turns to the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*: finding beauty in imperfections. When applied to interiors, this means celebrating the natural cycle of growth and decay such as a web of cracks on the wall and other gritty signifiers of the passing of time. To achieve this, design firm Hirsh Bedner Associates plays up the contrast of elements found in the restaurant's entryway. Distressed teak doors and irregular ceramic tiles recreate flaws, while the repeating pattern of an impressive oak trellis (the highlight of the re-design) depict perfection. True to the laws of *wabi-sabi*, the space eschews high gloss in favor of a muted look in grays, whites, and browns—all natural colors. The wooden slats, which also appear in the new teppanyaki counter and a hidden sushi bar, remind you of skinny trees. It is as if you are dining in a very cosmopolitan forest. This month, chef Wataru Hikawa highlights the colors of Japanese summers with a curated menu that uses only the freshest seasonal ingredients flown in from the source. To try: the *namataku ponzu* or octopus sashimi, Kyoto-style skewered beef, and *momo* or peach, Japan's signature summer fruit. It's the best antidote to a dreary day. ■

Makati Shangri-La Manila. +632 814 2580.



PHOTOGRAPH PAUL DEL ROSARIO

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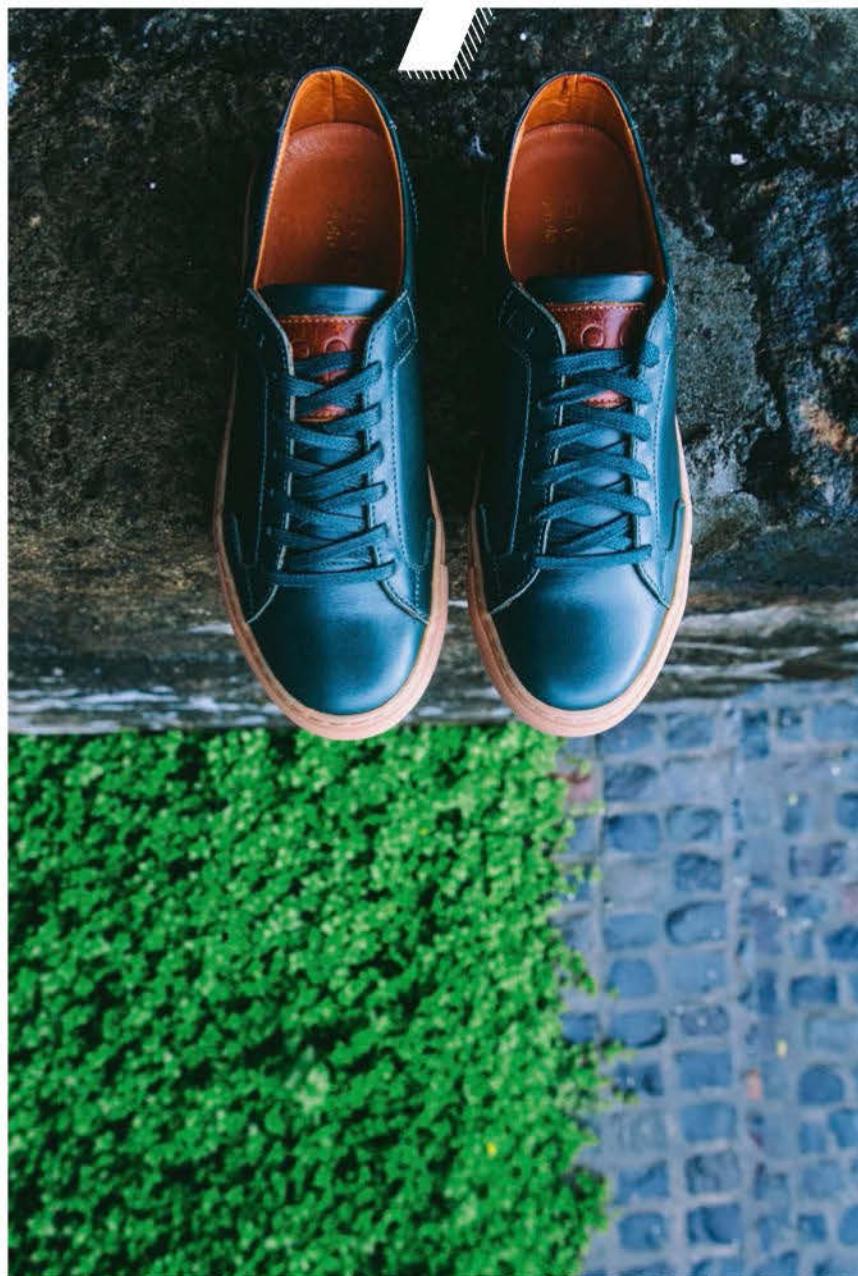
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style

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PHOTOGRAPHS PIA PUÑO STYLING CLIFFORD OLANDAY ART DIRECTION EDRIC DELA ROSA
LOCATION LAS CASAS FILIPINAS DE ACUZAR

LEAP OF FAITH

As with all things, style moves forward, drifting away from what you're used and settling into something different. While the buttoned-up way of dressing remains, an effortless and more approachable attitude prevails. Which brings us to the sneaker. Once reserved for athletic activities

(or a day of no activity), the performance shoe is becoming the footwear of choice, even becoming an acceptable alternative to laced-up oxfords. Just take a look at the many ways designers have remade the sneaker into something more premium and certainly worth wearing with, yes, an expensive suit (this one is made with Italian leather and Peruvian wild rubber). The upside to the change? Sneakers lend a dose of cool to anything you wear. Step forward. **Shoes (P8,990) by Piola, Rustan's Makati.**



The new new attitude is relaxed. Suits are broken or switched out entirely for a jacket and trousers. Everything is easier, and part of that movement is the sneaker—even one with kid-approved Velcro closures. Shoes (P49,998) by Dior Homme at Univers, One Rockwell.



How do you set yourself apart from a sea of low-top sneakers in pure white?
Choose a pair in calf leather, which has been embossed so that everything appears to be
hewn from impressive croc armor. Shoes (P34,700) by Louis Vuitton, Greenbelt 4.



The combination of sting ray-print leather and tactile suede transforms the '80s runner into a premium trainer that, in tone-on-tone navy, may be worn with a suit. Tech fabric used in its sole also provides thermal comfort and breathability. Shoes (P25,200) by Z Zegna at Ermeneigildo Zegna, Rustan's Makati.



No blaring emblems. No tricky features. No aggressive colorways. Just a good ol' pair of sneakers—which has been crafted using exquisite *nappa agneau* (that's lambskin for you) into a precise silhouette. The effect, of course, whether worn with a soft sport coat or a tailored trouser is subtle luxury. ■ Shoes by Hermès, Greenbelt 3.

ALL-AMERICAN UPGRADES

THE BEST OF AMERICAN STYLE FROM MEN'S NEW YORK FASHION WEEK



1. The Field Jacket from Tommy Hilfiger See the faded, lived-in effect? That's the result of pigment dyeing, and this lightweight, two-tone, deep-pocketed field jacket was built to look like you've had it forever.

2. The Blue Suit from Ovadia & Sons All soft curves and easy lines (up to and including the drawstring waistband), this is as relaxed and comfortable as suits come. **3. The Weekender from Coach** The pebbled leather. The earthy shade of green. The soft and sturdy shell. This is what Coach does best. **4. The Button-Down from Thom Browne**

Browne has always upended our expectations of how things should fit, and this trim button-down shirt will follow your body's natural contours so well that the rest of your shirts will start to feel loose.

5. The Bomber from Michael Kors The shell is soft wool, not tough leather, and with its detachable shearling collar, it's unlike any other bomber out there. **6. The Sweater from Billy Reid** We're not sure what we'd call the pattern on this chunky knit, but as with most things Billy Reid, it will mark the man wearing it in the best possible way. ■

ASK NICK SULLIVAN

THE U.S. FASHION DIRECTOR WILL NOW TAKE YOUR QUESTIONS

What with Instagram, why does anybody go to fashion shows anymore?

**MICHAEL STEVENS
LOS ANGELES**

► Look: I love Instagram as much as the next Instagram fiend, but there's

no substitute for seeing clothes with your own eyes. And also, in New York, Milan, et al., the runway shows are only half the story. For every big-budget show there are 10 low-key events where I can see all the clothes up close and actually touch them. To

feel their weights and textures and get a good sense of their nuances—you're never going to get that from a screen.

I have friends who make a big deal about wearing only "Made in America" clothes. Are clothes made here actually better made, or what?

**JOSH WEISS
PENSACOLA, FLA.**

► In my mind, "Made in Anywhere" is not a univer-

sal guarantee of quality, but it's potential evidence of something possibly more important. Over the past 10 years or so, Billy Reid, Rag & Bone, and Filson, to name a few brands, have been trying to make as much of their stuff as possible in the U.S., and that has brought jobs to parts of the States where manufacturing had all but packed up. I can't guarantee these clothes are "better made" than if they'd been made elsewhere, but their provenance speaks to a kind

of integrity that is all too missing from the clothes we wear. That's worth something.

What's the most American piece of clothing?

**S. ATKINS
CHICAGO**

► Jeans.

**GOT A QUESTION
FOR NICK SULLIVAN?
E-MAIL HIM AT
ESQSTYLE@HEARST.
COM, OR TWEET HIM
AT @ESQSTYLE.**



TOMMY TURNS 30

THE PURVEYOR OF AMERICAN COOL PARTIES
IN NEW YORK, PARIS, AND BEIJING.

Tommy Hilfiger grew up in the small town of Elmirra in upstate New York. When he was a teenager, upon falling in love with rock 'n' roll, he dreamed of becoming a rock star. "Except I couldn't play an instrument. I decided to try and look the part instead but the styles I wanted weren't available in Elmirra, so it became my new dream to develop very cool, rock 'n' roll-inspired clothing," he recalls. Thus, an 18-year-old Tommy opened his first store, People's Place, where he sold bell-bottoms and other styles not found in his small town. "That set the foundation for my career and confirmed that designing was my true passion," he says. Soon after, Tommy moved to New York.

In 1985, he introduced his first signature collection by modernizing button-down shirts, chinos, and other time-honored classics with updated fits and details. Since then, the relaxed, youthful attitude of his first designs has remained the distinctive hallmark in all his collections. To celebrate his brand's 30th anniversary, the designer recreates his fall 2015 show in Beijing, the first time the American brand has transported the entire experience to an international setting. "I am thrilled to be in China for this next stop on our 30th anniversary tour, following our events in New York and Paris earlier this year," he shares. "Our fashion shows create an immersive guest experience that really brings the collections to life, and it has been an honor to be able to share this experience with a wider audience in China."

The show, which was attended by over 800 guests,

was presented against the incredible backdrop of a football stadium set that included AstroTurf, yard lines, goal posts, and a giant Jumbotron screen. And the after party was, of course, inspired by the quintessential American football half-time show and tailgating party. (Spotted: actress Ziyi Zhang and model Liu Wen.)

The fall collection fuses American football and varsity motifs with Tommy's classic designs. "We looked to Ali MacGraw in *Love Story* and were inspired by iconic styles from the late '60s and the early '70s, mixed with athletic influences and a modern, effortless, elevated twist," he explains. "It's a marriage of sport and luxury." The designer has always turned to pop culture—"fashion, art, music, and entertainment, which I summarize with the acronym F.A.M.E."—for a wealth of inspiration, but he also finds ideas in everyday things. "It could be from a visit to the MET or MoMA, a stroll in Central Park with my five-year-old son, or heading to a concert with my wife or children," he says.

While in Beijing, he also celebrated the opening of the largest Tommy Hilfiger store in China located at the In88 shopping center. "It feels like it was only yesterday when I founded my namesake brand," Tommy reflects. "I dreamed of having a globally-recognized lifestyle brand but I never could have expected that our company would grow on such an incredible scale. We are very proud that today we have over 1,400 stores in more than 90 countries worldwide."

Greenbelt 5.

GOOD SPORTS

AMERICAN FOOTBALL
+ ALI MACGRAW'S
LOVE STORY = TOMMY
HILFIGER'S FALL 2015
COLLECTION

ATHLETIC



Football helmet



Football pin



Varsity jacket



Rugby stripe scarf



Cable knit hat



'70S PREPPY

WATCH MEN

MEET THREE MEN AND THE WATCHES THEY WEAR.



No. 1

ONE BIG BREATH

FREE DIVER CHRISTIAN REDL AND THE DEEP SEA ICE WATCH.

Christian "The Iceman" Redl, the man who spent the last couple of decades setting world records for free diving under the ice, hates the cold so much that he finds Manila's searing 38-degree Celsius temperature a pleasurable experience.

For the extreme sport of free diving, The Iceman goes down crazy depths and then comes back up, all on a single breath and without the aide of breathing gear. He is really a master of the big gulp, easily holding his breath for seven-and-a-half minutes. In fact, on a free dive in April, he only took a minute, garnering him another record as the first person to free dive at the geographic North Pole.

It wasn't his intention to set a world record on that expedition. Instead, Christian wanted to call attention on how global warming is causing the polar ice caps to melt, endangering not only the habitats of animals like the polar bears, but eventually the homes of men, as well. "The sea level rises one meter, the Maldives is gone. Two meters, Singapore is flooded... when the sea level rises five meters, the West Coast in the U.S. is completely gone," he says.

A couple of weeks later, in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, Taipei, and, finally, Manila, he continued to speak more about the environmental issue ("In Asia, people pay a lot more attention to it") as well as share tales of his frozen adventures such as when he shed happy tears when his plane landed on the

North Pole and, within five seconds, the tears froze.

To survive extreme conditions, Christian's gear must be tough. When he did his ice dive in the Gokyo Lakes in Nepal, the highest freshwater lake system in the world, he was wearing an Edox Iceman II (yes, the Iceman collection was named after him), which is water-resistant up to 1,000 meters and highly readable even in the depths where light barely penetrates.

For a more recent adventure, Christian wore the iconic Edox Hydro-Sub, which has set the bar for dive watches with 500-meter water resistance, thanks to its double O-rings. And now, he sports the new Hydro-Sub North Pole, which, like its predecessor, is water-resistant up to 500 meters. But unlike previous quartz watches, the new Hydro-Sub is powered by an automatic movement. Batteries apparently cannot withstand the extreme cold, thus a quartz watch would be useless in the North Pole, where the temperature registers at 30 degrees below zero.

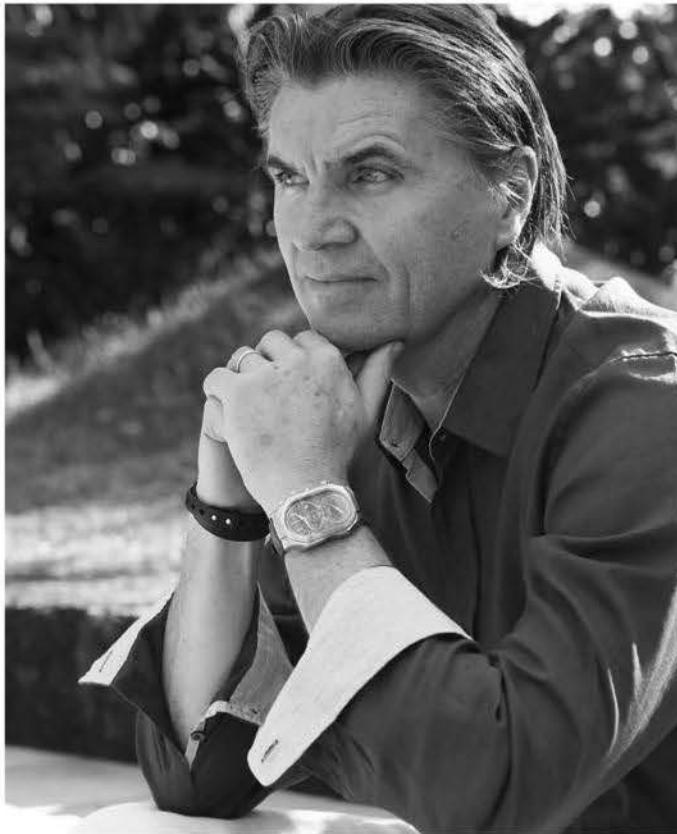
Another feature of the new Hydro-Sub is the **Master-Lock**—a sliding mechanism that protects the crown from damage. It was Christian's idea to add the little shield: "I needed something to protect the crown...because the watch is one of the most important instruments on the North Pole. If my GPS [breaks], then I can use the watch to find my way."



Hydro-Sub North Pole

Lucerne, Shangri-La Plaza Mall.

Will Stein,
president and
co-founder of
Philip Stein.



No. 2

FEELIN' BETTER

WILL STEIN AND THE WATCH THAT TUNES INTO GOOD VIBES.

The big question is will it work? Will Stein, president and co-founder of Philip Stein, takes out what looks like a metal credit card from his wallet. The Life Card, he says, is a way to make the intangible Natural Frequency Technology, the well-being feature of his popular eight-shaped, dual-time watches, more evident. "If you put this under your food or beverage, it will enhance the flavor, taste, and smell," he explains. "Even water will taste different."

Will asks for a lemon, a knife, and two plates from a nearby waitress. "One of the tests I did was with a wealthy industrialist. We were at Cipriani in London. He loved the watch, but when he heard about the technology, he was rolling his eyes." So Will did the Lemon Test, and after the demo, the industrialist arranged for him to work with his scientists in beverage production. They are now running tests on a machine that, not only filters water, but enhances its flavor, too.

The lemon arrives. He cuts it down the center and places

each half on separate plates. He then places one of the plates on top of the Life Card. We wait.

Here's how Will explains the technology: When manmade frequencies (from phones, computers, lights) clash with natural frequencies, it results in that icky, unwell feeling. The metal disc inside a Philip Stein watch acts as a fine-tuned antenna. "It harnesses the natural frequencies around us and channels it into our body for our benefit," he says. "So now we have this balance. Many people report that they feel calmer, have less stress or can cope with stress better, and are more relaxed."

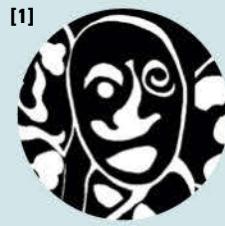
But he points out that the watch is neither a medical device nor a magic talisman that brings about an overwhelming feeling of elation as soon as you wear it. The effects are more subtle—"changes that can have a big impact after a while." Or, put another way, it's about centering: "I believe strongly that your body can heal itself, but only when it's in the right environment and the right state of mind."

The lemons are finally ready, so it's time for a bite. There should be a noticeable difference, but it seems that the two slices taste vaguely the same—just a few degrees of faint sourness from each other. Will says the result may be because of the type of lemons he used. He then shows a photo of another lemon on his iPhone. One side is vibrant yellow (this part, he explains, was placed on top of the card) and the other is, well, on its way to rot town.

The technology, he points out, may work differently for each person—much like lemons. "If I take an aspirin and you take an aspirin, we would probably have different results," he offers. When people say it didn't work for them, Will advises them to take it off for a week and try again. "At the end of the day, even if you don't feel anything, it might still work," he says. And anyway, "...you still have a beautiful watch." You can't argue with that.

—CLIFFORD OLANDAY

Lucerne, Shangri-La Plaza Mall.



No. 3

UNMASKED

ARTIST ALEXANDRE
CHARRIOL AND THE WATCH
WITH MANY FACES.

Alexandre Charriol dares you to reveal yourself. A continuation of the artist's **[1] Human Flow** exhibition, which toured Manila last year, the **Night Masks** collection of Charriol expands on his dialogue about the strange way people interact with each other. The ghostly, blown up faces of his paintings are etched on the dial of the **[2] Alexandre C watch**—the quintessential Charriol timepiece that his father Philippe has named after him. **[3] "Night Masks was painted** with patience and precision. Each face was formed organically by adding and subtracting black and white paint until I found shapes that I liked and felt right," he says. "The symbolism of these pieces is to free ourselves from the masks that society sets upon us and be our true selves." With every glance at your wrist, many faces will stare at you from a field of steel, bronze, blue, or charcoal. The darkest is our pick (it offsets the preciousness of the Charriol cabled bracelet strap). Only 500 pieces are available. **Greenbelt 4.**



NO SWEAT

A FULL-BODY GUIDE TO LOOKING COOL IN THE HEAT

BY RODNEY CUTLER

For most of us—runners, roofers, pool-side loungers—sweating is great. It cools us. It makes our skin appear healthier. It is an accomplishment—except, well, when it isn't. Like when you're 15 minutes into a date or a presentation and your shirt is already soaked or your brow glazed. In those cases, sweat makes you look not so much like a man who's arrived as a man who's just been running from a large animal.

Fortunately, you can take control of when you perspire—no matter where it happens. Here's how.

Back sweat

Anyone who's peeled his back off a leather driver's seat and then speed-walked to his desk chair

before anyone sees the Rorschach test on his shirt knows this: It's time you treat your back like your armpits. Sweat glands work the same no matter where they are on your body, so you can use the same antiperspirant for your back as you use for your underarms. Unless you're some kind of yogi who can rub a stick on your spine, you'll want to try a spray, like [1] Axe's new Dry Spray antiperspirant (axe-whitelabel.com).

Pit sweat

If you're already spraying your back, you might as well spray your armpits, too. Do this routine at night, when you sweat less and your glands are more easily suppressed. Also, on warm days, avoid co-

loner—sweat strengthens its scent to a nauseating degree. Instead, try a high-end scented deodorant, like [2] **Viktor & Rolf's Spicebomb** (shop.nordstrom.com), which will make you smell a little like a grapefruit wrapped in leather and fresh tobacco.

Foot sweat

Runners like myself know foot stench is a menace that can threaten a man's relationship with his loved one. They should use the odor-taming [3] **Lavilin foot deodorant cream** (lavilin.com). Apply it only once a week to help preserve your sneakers (and your relationship).

Face sweat

In the summer, switch to a light facial moisturizer,

like [4] **Kiehl's Men's Oil Eliminator 24-Hour Anti-Shine moisturizer** (kiehls.com). It won't clog your pores—instead, it'll use glycerin to pull good moisture into the skin and silica to wick away sweat and oil.

Crotch sweat

Finally, pat some [5] **Jack Black Dry Down Friction-Free powder** (get-jackblack.com) between your legs. Like other body powders, it has cornstarch, which absorbs sweat and other kinds of moisture down there before it starts to smell or, God forbid, chafe. It also has green tea, cucumber, lavender, and chamomile, all of which soothe the skin, making it quite refreshing.

With thanks to dermatol-

ogists Paul Jarrod Frank and Whitney Bowe. Rodney Cutler is an Ironman triathlete and the owner of Cutler salons in New York City.

STILL LOOK LIKE YOU JUST RAN FROM A BEAR?

If pharmacy antiperspirants don't work, consider visiting a dermatologist. They might recommend clinical-strength antiperspirant or pills. You can also get Botox injections in your pits or palms, which will keep you from sweating for three months, or you can try Mira-Dry, an in-office treatment that permanently kills sweat glands by microwaving them to death.



MAKES YOUR HAIR STRONGER + MORE RESILIENT

vs non-conditioning shampoo



NEW DOVE MEN + CARE SHAMPOO
[NOW IN THE PHILIPPINES]

HOME, WORK, AWAY

AND

ADVICE AND INSPIRATION ON HOW
TO MAKE THE MOST OF STAYING AT
HOME, WORKING IN THE OFFICE,
AND GOING ON VACATION

RELAX AT HOME...

BY GROWING AN INDOOR GARDEN
AND WEARING SOMETHING SOFT.

PG. 44

STAY SANE AT WORK...

BY CONQUERING THE AFTERNOON SLUMP AND
FINDING THE PERFECT EARPHONES.

PG. 46

GO ON A PROPER HOLIDAY...

BY STOCKING YOUR IN-FLIGHT BAG
AND TRAVELING ALONE.

PG. 49



Sleeping Like You're on Vacation

Had the best night's sleep of your life on vacation? Well, it's probably because you spent all day lounging on the beach instead of being at work. But hotels do know about the best bedding. Here's what they use, should you want to replicate that vacation-sleep feeling at home.

1. FOUR SEASONS RESORT

LANA'I AT MANELE BAY, LANA'I CITY, HAWAII:

In addition to the plush pillows and linens that all Four Seasons properties provide, this resort features a bed topper with Gel-Touch Foam Center technology to absorb extra body heat. Beautyrest (beautyrest.com) products also use GelTouch.

devoted to Grand Hyatt beds:

Each sheet, pillowcase, and duvet is 300-thread-count 100 percent Egyptian cotton.

3. SOFITEL NEW YORK, NEW YORK CITY: The feather beds in this modern midtown hotel boast 400-thread-count Yves Delorme sheets (yvesdelorme.com) and a down duvet from Pacific Coast Feather Company.

2. MANCHESTER GRAND HYATT, SAN DIEGO:

There's a reason people are so

4. WASHINGTON SCHOOL HOUSE, PARK CITY, UTAH:

This lodge uses linens from Pratesi (the more than 100-year-old Italian luxury sheet-maker provided bedding for Elizabeth Taylor and Andy Warhol) (usa.shop.pratesi.com) and down feather pillows.

5. RANCHO VALENCIA RESORT & SPA, RANCHO SANTA FE, CALIFORNIA:

After a day at the spa, you can relax in Frette sheets (frette.com). This resort uses Frette's 600-thread-count linens and down bedding.

THE ENDORSEMENT

COTTON PAJAMAS

Some men's idea of nocturnal luxury is silk. And some men's idea of nocturnal comfort is nudity. But really, if you want to get the best possible night's sleep during the warmer months, you should invest in two or three pairs of quality, soft, breathable cotton pajamas, like the options featured here. Putting on a good pair of PJs is like wrapping yourself up in a freshly washed set of sheets—and we know how rare it is that you actually have freshly washed sheets. Plus, you'll feel like Jimmy Stewart in *Rear Window* and find lounging and staycations far more enjoyable.



1. Cotton pajama shirt and cotton pajama pants by Sleepy Jones; sleepyjones.com.

2. Cotton twill pajama shirt and cotton twill pajama pants by Alexander Olch; olch.com.

3. Cotton pajamas by Brooks Brothers; brooksbrothers.com.

HOME

HOW TO RELAX, RESTORE, AND VACATION LIKE YOU
MEAN IT WITHOUT EVER LEAVING YOUR HOUSE

MOSQUITO-PROOF YOUR LIFE

NATURAL

Good lemon-eucalyptus sprays are EPA-approved and repel mosquitoes for up to six hours.

SPRAY

Off! FamilyCare Clean Feel insect repellent actually feels dry, not greasy, on skin and smells clean.

BEHAVIOR

Exercise indoors. Mosquitoes are drawn to lactic acid and carbon dioxide from your breath, both of which you produce more of when you exercise.

HIGH-TECH

Ultrasonic devices don't work at all, and though traditional blacklight bug-zappers do kill lots of bugs, many bugs are food for friendly predators, and only a small percentage are mosquitoes.

LOW-TECH

A fan. The breeze disperses carbon dioxide, throwing them off your course, and since they're weak fliers, the current can render them unable to land on you.

THE Lounge-Style Spectrum

LAUNDRY DAY	ADEQUATE	ACCEPTABLE	NIGHTCAP AND CIGAR
			
Cotton tank by Hanes; hanes.com . Cotton-and-elastane boxer-briefs by Jockey; jockey.com .	Cotton T-shirt by Lacoste; lacoste.com . Reversible shorts by Nike; nike.com .	Egyptian-cotton T-shirt by Sunspel; sunspel.com . Cotton sweatpants by Diesel; shop.diesel.com .	Cotton robe by Frette; frette.com . Silk pajamas by Derek Rose; derek-rose.com .



BORED YET? HOW TO CLEAN A GIANT PLANT

On a regular basis, you'll want to clean your plants so that they not only look better but also stay alive. Dust can impair a plant's ability to photosynthesize by preventing light from reaching the leaves.

1. Look at its leaves. If they're large and smooth, like the leaves of some bromeliads or peace lilies, head to step two. If they're smaller and more delicate, jump to step three.

2. Gently wipe each leaf with a soft, damp cloth.

3. A quick shower easily gets rid of dust. Place the plant in the bathtub or sink, and then spray it with room-temperature water for about 20 seconds. During the warmer months, this can be done outside with a hose. Let it air-dry for a few hours or overnight before moving it so that it doesn't drip everywhere.

HOUSEPLANTS 101

If it's too hot to enjoy the great outdoors, add a little nature to your great indoors.



FICUS
PROS: Easy to grow; can look impressively treelike.
CONS: Many have a milky sap that may cause skin issues.



AFRICAN VIOLETS
PROS: Inexpensive, low-maintenance, pretty flowers.
CONS: Do not tolerate overwatering well, so go easy.



BEGONIAS
PROS: Flowers come in a variety of textures and colors.
CONS: Needs trimming to produce fresh growth.



SUCCULENTS
PROS: Endless variety; very minimal water requirements.
CONS: Prickly spines are bad for pets and handsy guests.



HERBS
PROS: Fresh herbs for cooking.
CONS: Require a lot of light or they get "leggy," as the stems grow long and thin.

Thanks to Sylvia Schmeichel, horticulturist for the American Horticultural Society.

THE MORNING AFTER

HOW TO CLEAN UP AFTER A WILD NIGHT

ILLUSTRATIONS (ABOVE) CES OLONDRIZ (TOP RIGHT) PETER OUMANSKI

CARPET

Before a stain can set, blot the spot immediately with a cloth or white paper towel (with no print), and mist it with water. To find the most effective cleaning mixture, look it up on the Carpet and Rug Institute Spot Solver's Web site, which gives step-by-step instructions for cleaning up more than 100 different stains. For wine, they recommend mixing one quarter teaspoon of liquid dish detergent with one cup of lukewarm water. Put a small amount of the solution on a white cloth and dab gently, working from the edges of the spill to the center. Let the solution soak into the spill for a few minutes, then blot with

a white paper towel. Repeat as long as there is a transfer of the spill to the towel. Rinse with water and blot dry.

SOFA

The good news is if you recently bought your furniture, you can often get it treated with stain-resistant chemicals. Still this stuff is not impervious and wears off over time. Depending on the fabric, you can sometimes take a whole cushion to the dry cleaner. If you're dealing with, say, the back of a couch that's been "decorated" by a drunk friend with marker, check the fabric tag before proceeding. If it is marked "W," you can try to undo the damage with a solution of half a tea-

spoon of liquid dish soap per quart of warm water. Using a clean absorbent paper towel is very effective as it gently agitates and absorbs the spill simultaneously. Rinse the affected area with clean water.

BEDSHEETS

Washing machine. But if the party was a real success, then you probably just want to burn them.

SINK

Put a few spoons of baking soda into a bowl and slowly add vinegar (add it too quickly and you've made your third-grade science-project volcano) until the mixture forms a thick paste. Spread

over rust spots and let sit for 10 minutes; rub the paste in with a toothbrush or stiff-bristled cleaning brush and let sit for another 10 to 15 minutes. Then rinse with soap and water.

WALLS

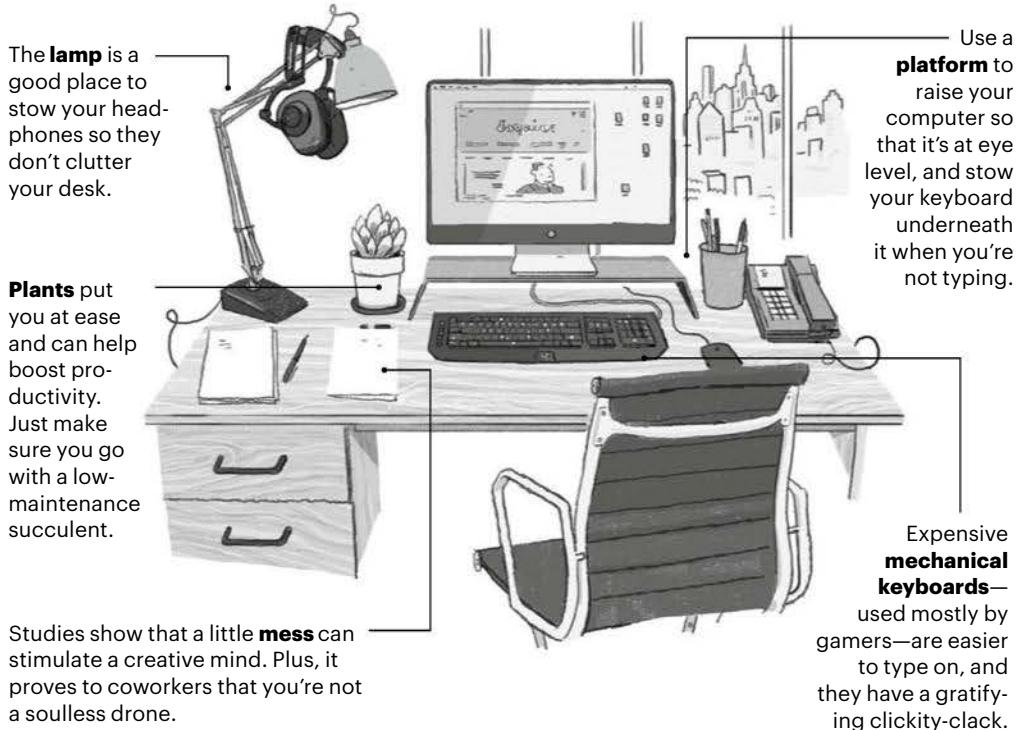
For stains like marker or oil, clean immediately with a little dish soap and water, which most paints are made to withstand without developing spot discoloration. If a stain (like a grease spatter, say) sinks into the drywall, tough luck—it's permanent. In that case, apply primer over the stain and then repaint the entire wall, as a spot-cover will be obvious if the wall paint is more than two months old.

WORK

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE 24 PERCENT OF YOUR WEEK YOU SPEND AT THE OFFICE

GUIDE TO YOUR COMMAND CENTER

THE PERFECT DESK SETUP



ARTWORK AT WORK



What's on your walls sends a message—and you don't want that message to be that you need a cheesy motivational poster in order to get your work done. Here's what to aim for.

• **Consider scale.** Don't place one small piece on a large blank wall. Decide between a statement wall, which has one bold image, and a gallery wall, which has

a collection of small similar-themed pieces in interesting arrangements.

• **Avoid extremes:** You don't want boring reproduc-

tions of masterpieces and bland landscapes that belong in a waiting room, nor do you want art that's so bold it becomes distracting.

• **Consider the context.** If your office is modern, minimalist, and white (think creative director), opt for bright colors in your wall art. If you have a darker, more traditional office with lots of wood (think lawyer), look for art with rich jewel tones, like sapphire blue or emerald green.

• **Try a vintage ad.** Not a shiny reproduction poster, which looks cheap, but an original oversized lithograph that highlights an interest, like an ad for cars, cigars, skiing, or a travel destination. The depth of color in these vintage prints can't be matched by modern-day printing; try international-poster.com.

cigars, skiing, or a travel destination. The depth of color in these vintage prints can't be matched by modern-day printing; try international-poster.com.

• **Invest in an emerging artist.** Showcasing art from a young artist or photographer you discovered is an easy conversation starter, so read up on him or her online first. Buying contemporary work is a bit of a gamble in terms of financial return on your investment, so it's best to buy something you genuinely want to see every day, not something you're hoping will increase in resale value. A good source of emerging artists' work is affordableartfair.com.

Thanks to Norah Guignon, founder of \$1,000-and-under artwork site Curate1k.com.



Suggestions for the well-curated bookshelf

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES:

Me, Inc.: Build an Army of One, Unleash Your Inner Rock God, Win in Life and Business, by Gene Simmons

•••
The Prince, by Niccolo Machiavelli

•••
The Secret, by Rhonda Byrne

•••
Corporate Magick: Mystical Tools for Business Success, by Bob Johnson

•••
Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun, by Wess Roberts

•••
How to Lead Unwilling Followers, by Frank McKinley

•••
Escape from Cubicle Nation: From Corporate Prisoner to Thriving Entrepreneur, by Pamela Slim

INSTEAD, STOCK IT WITH (AND ACTUALLY READ THEM, IN CASE SOMEONE ASKS YOU ABOUT THEM):

Bold: How to Go Big, Create Wealth and Impact the World, by Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler

•••
The Oxford English Dictionary

•••
Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk, by Peter L. Bernstein

•••
The Innovators: How a Group of Hackers, Geniuses, and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution, by Walter Isaacson

•••
Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds, by Charles MacKay

•••
Esquire's the Meaning of Life: Wisdom, Humor, and Damn Good Advice from 64 Extraordinary Lives

PICK-ME-UPS

Nutritionists call it the “witching hour”—that late-afternoon slump when your blood sugar plummets and you can barely keep your head off your keyboard. Here’s how to get ahead of it.

Drink the right caffeine.

A cup of coffee this late can make you jittery and make it hard to fall asleep at night. Instead, try drinking Matcha, a green powder you mix into hot water. It’s more potent than green tea but still mellower than coffee. Bonus: It also kicks up your metabolism.

Cut out the grains. A big meal, especially one with grains, makes you sleepy. For lunch, have a large serving of protein (keeps you alert) and half a plate of vegetables (keeps you full), and save the grains for dinner.

Don’t wait to find a snack. If you’re sleepy or irritable and trolling the office looking for a boost, it’s no surprise the chips in the vending machine or the bowl of M&Ms on your assistant’s desk will appeal the most. Plan ahead so that you’re not making a decision when you’re exhausted. Keep your desk drawer stocked with nuts, soup, and low-sugar Kind bars and store hard-boiled eggs in your office fridge.

Drink more water. You’re probably dehydrated, which can make you lose concentration and feel hungry. Find out how much water you need by dividing your body weight in two—that’s the number of ounces you need a day. (For example, if you weigh 180 pounds, drink 90 ounces of water.) Hit half of your water requirement by 4:00 (in the example, 45 ounces) and you won’t be as sapped.

Thanks to Lauren Slayton, dietitian and founder of Foodtrainers in New York City.



ON-THE-JOB HEALTH

Studies now show that even if you exercise, sitting for extended periods raises your risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes, and general early death. Here’s how to compensate for all that sitting and staring at the computer.

Get off your ass. The ideal scenario is your company springs for a treadmill desk, so you can walk slowly

while you work. But since that’s not happening, try the more affordable standing desk. Really. Give it a day before you knock it. If you’re chair-bound, arrange your work space in a way that enables you to type without hunching your shoulders. If you can’t change anything about your arrangement, at least stand up and walk around for 10 minutes for every hour you sit.

Roll your wrists. Relieve the wrist ache from typing by making a fist (lightly, like you’re holding a baby bird in each hand) and do wrist circles, 10 times inward and 10 times outward.

Shrug your shoulders. Doing this move several times releases neck and shoulder tension, thereby increasing blood flow and oxygen, and it isn’t as much of a distraction for your cubicle-mate as big arm circles are.

Get a hands-free phone device. Close your office door if you’re afraid of what people will think of your hands-free device. Using it will not only prevent the neck pain caused by trying to hold the phone between your ear and your shoulder when you need to take notes during a call, but also enable you to pace in your office, giving you better circulation than sitting does.

Arch your back. When sitting, we

tend to round our backs in a C-curve, with our stomach caving in. Reverse that C-curve in a simple stretch: Stand up and arch your back so that your stomach sticks out.

Get out of the office. Cigarette breaks are relaxing. They’re an excuse to step away from what you’re doing and take some deep meditative breaths. Problem is, cigarettes, you know, kill you. Instead, step outside and take deep breaths of actual fresh air. Turns out it’s even more relaxing.

Give your eyes a break. Try staring at something in the distance every 15 minutes. Blink often or use eye drops if you’re dried out. If your eyes are still feeling strained at the end of the day, talk to an optometrist about getting reading glasses or special computer eyeglasses. You should also make sure to wipe off any dust on the screen and adjust the monitor so that there’s no glare from windows or lights.

Don’t eat lunch at your desk. And if you do, use hand sanitizer. Desks are usually the most germ-infested part of an office—and that includes the bathroom.

Take that vacation time. All two weeks. Even if it’s long weekends here and there. Your coworkers could stand a break from you.

Thanks to Michele Olson, endowed professor of exercise science at Auburn University at Montgomery.

THE OFFICE-CHAIR SPECTRUM



HOW TO GIVE A PRESENTATION

Because no one cares about what you say if you don’t say it right

» **Practice.** Give your whole spiel from beginning to end two or three times out loud so that you can find the places where you stumble over awkward wording and fix them. Once you’re good on your own, run through it in front of your significant other or a work friend to see how the material lands. » **Slow down.** You are definitely talking too fast. Don’t make the listener struggle to keep up. » **Make good eye contact.** No staring at your

notes or over the heads of your audience, or robotically scanning back and forth across the audience without blinking. Beforehand, divide your presentation into segments and deliver each part to different people in the audience: check their faces and body language—are they nodding along, or are they checking their watches?—to see how you’re being received. » **Learn the key points and examples of your speech.** Speaking with-



THE MODERN WORK BAG

The messenger bag is fine...if you don't mind people thinking you're an intern. The briefcase is impressive...if you want to impress people by making them think you're carrying a million dollars in cash. Filson has the perfect blend of the two: the Tin Cloth Original briefcase (filson.com). It's professional but not too stuffy. It says you're comfortable in the outdoors but you're not from the backwoods. And its oil-finish cotton means you don't have to worry about your cargo, be it a laptop or a stash of small, unmarked bills.

The Perfect **HEADPHONES**

Yes, the Blue Microphones Mo-Fi headphones (mofiheadphones.com) look weird. Your coworkers will want to comment—but they probably won't, because that contraption around your head says: Don't bug me. I am listening to music. Really listening. Listening in a way that you just wish you could with those...what are those? Beats? Yeah, that's what I thought. It took a studio microphone company to reimagine the headphone and build something that's essentially two high-quality home speakers resting snugly over your ears. While most headphones rely on the amp of the device—say, a smartphone, which usually has an output of 20 to 30 mW and distorts the music at higher levels—the Mo-Fi have their own 240 mW amp. This way your phone doesn't have to scream to be heard, and you can experience the music with all its intended richness.



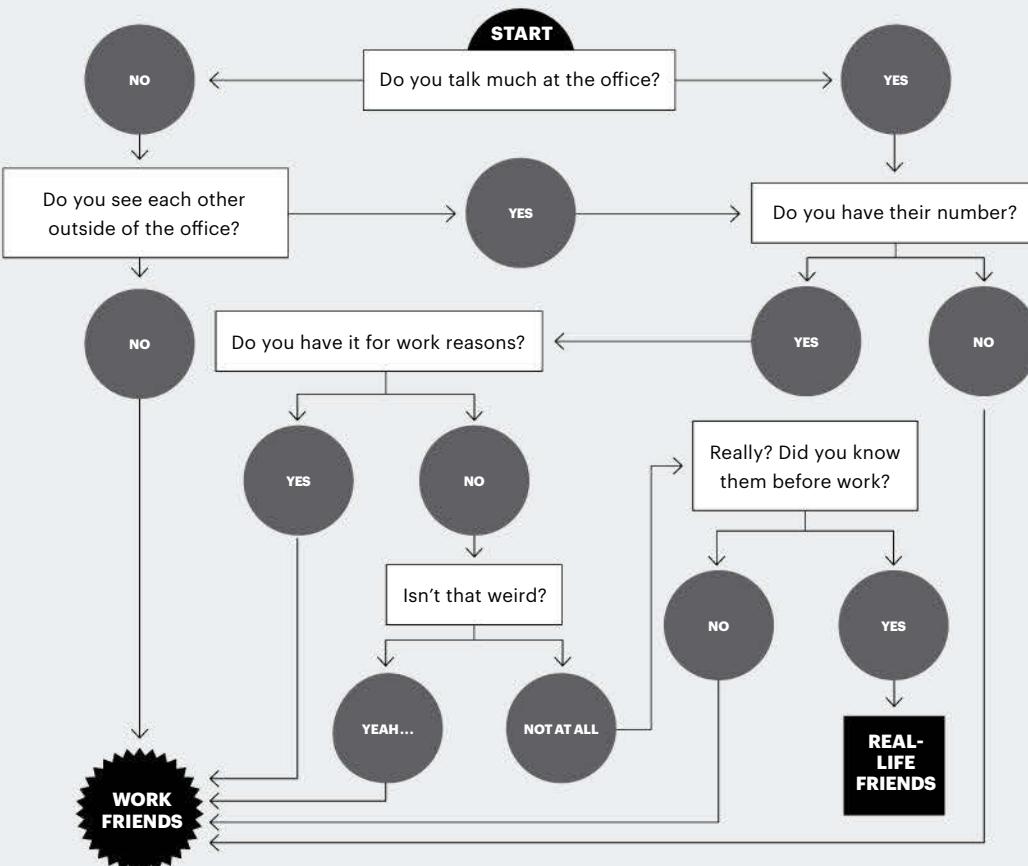
out notes is ideal, because you won't stare at them. But if you need notes, don't write out full sentences—just key words that launch you into the next segment. Skip an unwieldy stack of note cards and fit your text onto a single piece of paper—use 16-point type and 1.5-line spacing so that it's easy to see, and bold the first five words in each paragraph so you can spot them quickly. **► Don't jangle.** Especially if you're using a mic. Make sure to remove your keys and



WORST OFFICE HABITS **RANKED**

- 16.** Not responding to or acknowledging e-mails.
- 15.** Unnecessary reply-alls.
- 14.** Unnecessary meetings that could have been avoided with a reply-all.
- 13.** Bringing your phone to a meeting.
- 12.** Loud cell-phone rings.
- 11.** Sloppy e-mails.
- 10.** Dead-fish handshake.
- 9.** Coming to work when you're sick. No one is impressed.
- 8.** Clipping nails at your desk.
- 7.** Smelly food.
- 6.** Seriously, what is that smell?
- 5.** Cologne.
- 4.** Taking the last cup of coffee without starting another pot.
- 3.** Being too professional.
- 2.** Passive-aggressive notes.
- 1.** Taking someone else's food from the refrigerator.

ARE YOU WORK FRIENDS OR REAL-LIFE FRIENDS?



loose change from your pockets beforehand so that you don't amplify distracting sounds. **» Prepare for questions.** Plan for what your audience might ask you after the presentation and have answers prepared. If someone asks a question and you don't know the answer, don't lose your composure or bullshit—good listeners can tell when you're faking. Simply say, "I don't have the answer to that, but I'll find out for you," and then do it. This can actually be a

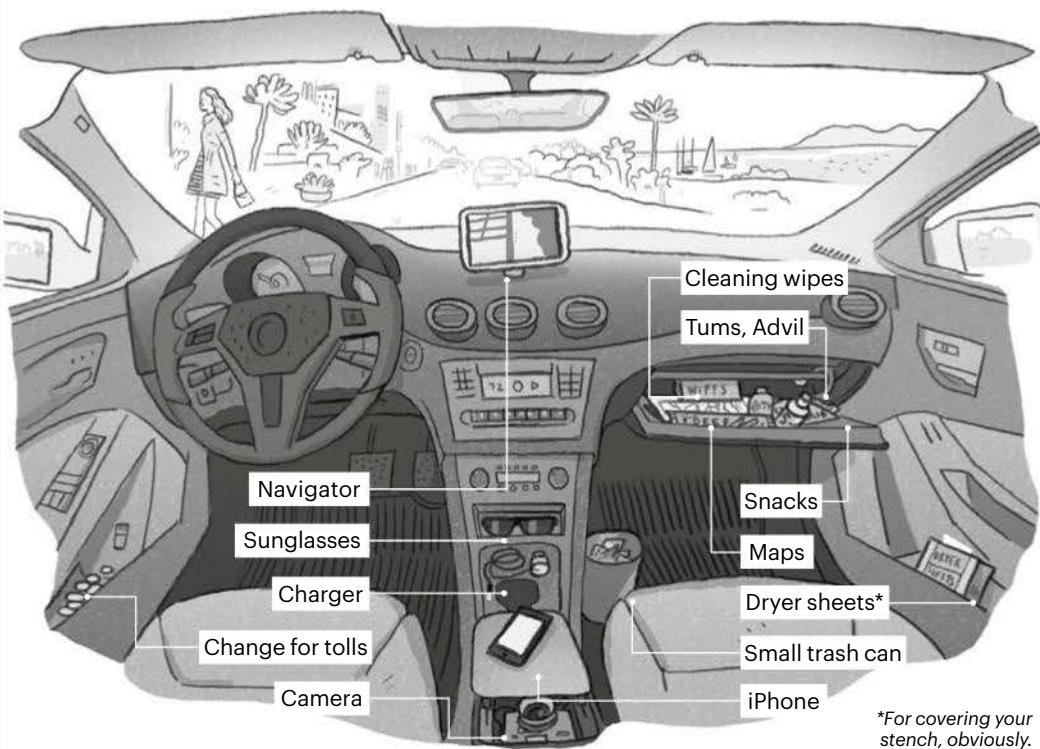
good way to continue the conversation after the presentation. **► Keep it short.** Attention spans are getting shorter, so be concise. Use the TED Talks' 18-minutes-or-less model. Also, whether you get through everything you wanted to or not, it's respectful to always keep to the cutoff time you originally told the attendees so that they don't start squirming or worrying about the call or meeting they may have set up for afterward.

AWAY

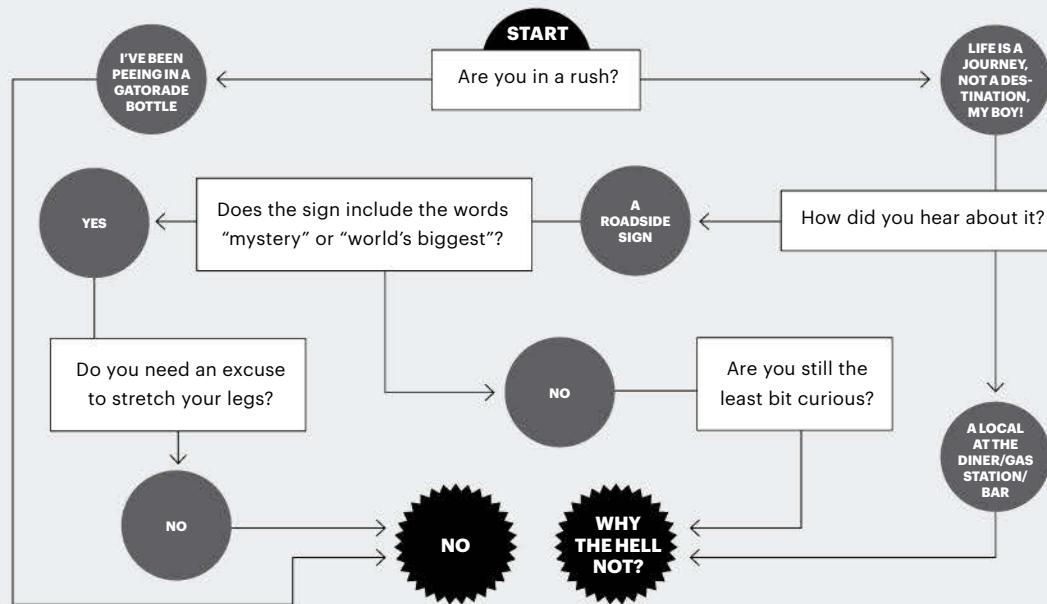
IF THIS ISSUE DOESN'T INSPIRE YOU TO TAKE A VACATION, THEN WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL WILL. THIS IS YOUR GUIDE FOR THAT JOURNEY.

COMMAND CENTER

EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR THE PERFECT ROAD ADVENTURE



HOW TO DETERMINE IF A **TOURIST TRAP** IS WORTH THE DETOUR



ROAD-TRIP RULES

Rule No. 34: Weak, burnt-tasting truck-stop coffee actually has way more caffeine than your robust organic hipster roast. Iced coffee is still king.

Rule No. 65: It takes about 48 hours for the "normal" world of schedules and work and everyday life to seem like the strange one.

Rule No. 87: There is little that restores camaraderie and soothes frayed nerves like buying a round of drinks at the end of the day.

Rule No. 88: On that note, don't drink at the hotel's homogenized bar. Go where the locals drink. Talk to people, especially older folks. Absorb everything you can.

Rule No. 129: The best parts of any region aren't visible from highways.

Rule No. 184: "The squeaky wheel gets the most grease" is not a maxim that works for road trips with a group. More like "the squeaky wheel gets left at a rest area in New Mexico."

Rule No. 201: Your regional stereotypes and preconceptions are, for the most part, completely wrong—except about barbecue being better in the South.

Rule No. 202: Don't be the regional stereotype and preconception from whence you hail.

Rule No. 361: You can prank a sleeping copilot. Once.

Rule No. 399: After a few solid days in a car with someone, you're family.

Rule No. 429: Eating fast food at gas stations is fine from time to time, but for real road-trip longevity, nothing raises morale like a good meal.

THE CRAZIEST PLACES YOU CAN ACTUALLY STAY

When another generic high-rise hotel won't cut it, use Airbnb to stay somewhere that will make Instagram explode



Tugboat: Sleep in a 1937 tugboat, now docked on a river in Portland, Oregon, that used to haul sugarcane and lumber.



Clock tower: In London, an 1868 clock tower has been converted into an apartment at St. Pancras Station.



Tree house: Rent a tree house with three rooms connected by rope bridges, built against a 150-year-old pine in Atlanta.



Train car: The Royal is a converted train carriage in Pokolbin, Australia.

EMERGENCIES ABROAD

How to save your ass

Problem: You lost your passport. **Solution:** You made a photocopy before you left and kept it separate from your actual passport, right? Bring that and whatever other ID you have to the embassy or a consulate.

Problem: You have the worst food poisoning of your life. **Solution:** It's probably actually your body reacting to different microbes in the water, from ice, tap water, or fruits and vegetables that have been washed. Take a Pepto and stick to bottled water, or dip a SteriPen in every glass, even when brushing your teeth.

Problem: You're racking up foreign-transaction

fees every time you use your credit card or an ATM. **Solution:** Call your bank before you go and ask them to waive the foreign-transaction fees for a month; if they won't do it on your credit card, they might on your debit card. Or just use a credit card that charges zero percent for foreign transactions, like AmEx Platinum or Chase Sapphire Preferred.

Problem: Political upheaval. **Solution:** Stay away from group gatherings like protests and rallies; avoid terrorist targets that Americans would frequent like Hard Rock Cafes (but hopefully you were doing that already).



AIRPLANE MAINTENANCE

Your guide to the well-stocked in-flight bag

1. EMERGEN-C: Because recirculated airplane air and loss of sleep from jet lag is a recipe for hating your life.

air and low humidity means your hands might resemble a dried-out lake bed.

2. KIEHL'S ULTIMATE STRENGTH HAND SALVE: Because recirculated

toots are real and you should be respectful of your fellow travelers.

3. GAS-X: Because

alti-toots are real and you should be respectful of your fellow travelers.

4. CETAPHIL GENTLE SKIN CLEANSER, TRAVEL SIZE:

Because it's gentle, and as previously noted, your skin has got it bad enough already.

5. VISINE TOTALITY: Because they call them

red eyes for a reason, and you don't want to go to that early meeting looking like you were on Willie Nelson's private plane.

6. BURT'S BEES NATURALLY NOURISHING MILK & HONEY BODY LOTION, TRAVEL SIZE: Because that also applies to the rest of your body.

7. CONTACT-LENS CASE:

Because why take that entire canister of hair product or ointment when you could scoop a few days' worth into this?

8. PURELL: Because you don't even want to know what bacteria could be on your tray table.



Why You Should TRAVEL ALONE

Traveling on your own allows you to travel light and without baggage. We travel to escape—from the pressures of work and life, and from who we have to be at home. But when you travel with others—kids, a girlfriend, college buddies—you have to be the same person when you exit the plane as when you boarded. It's impossible to escape everything from your previous life unless you disconnect from everyone who knows you. Traveling alone means making the experience entirely yours. Take pictures to be shared later (i.e., not on Instagram). Write postcards instead of status updates. Meet new friends. Do what you, and you alone, want to do. Eat terrible things. Place yourself firmly in the path of danger. Spend an entire day in bars and cafés. Do stupid shit, since there's no one to judge you. Be fully present, without anyone else to entertain. Be completely spontaneous. Cover more land. Challenge yourself. Meet strangers. Make love to a stranger—preferably one that you didn't meet in the Red Light District. Make fantastic stories that nobody will be able to refute.

Worst Travel Gadgets RANKED

8. Fanny packs

7. Digital translators

6. Knee Defender seat-recline-stoppers

5. Airplane-seat-back organizers

4. Travel bidets

3. Luggage scooters

2. Luggage-handle cup holders

1. Selfie sticks

THE DISCRIMINATING MAN'S GUIDE TO AIRBNB

It's not just a way to travel inexpensively—booking your shelter through Airbnb can lead to some of the greatest, most unique traveling experiences. But make sure you do it right.

READ THE REVIEWS. It sounds obvious, but it's tempting to just look at how many stars they've received and book it. The details in the reviews are telling and often mention the little things (it's near an airport and planes fly overhead all night; there's no street parking) the host wouldn't share in the listing.

GOOGLE-STALK THE PROPERTY. Sure, the professional photos of the house are dreamy, but a common scam is to show gorgeous Photoshopped images of a fictitious address; you show up and nothing's there. Make sure this place actually exists (and looks as grand as promised) by doing a Google Earth and street-view scope of the address. Is the rest of the street lined with dilapidated houses? Is the "quick walk to restaurants" the host described actually a two-mile walk next to a highway? Ten minutes on Google Maps and you'll know.

MESSAGE BEFORE YOU BOOK. For some Airbnb properties you can put in your dates and book without contacting the host. Though it may seem more convenient, take the time to write to the host and ask a few questions about the property or location—from their response, you can get a better sense of how the person communicates and what you're getting before you commit.

RENT FROM VERIFIED HOSTS. A Verified badge means the host has provided Airbnb with a driver's license or passport, e-mail, and phone number, and connected to its accounts on social sites like Facebook and LinkedIn. Since they've proven their identity, they're more accountable, so you're more protected.

COMMUNICATE AND PAY ONLY THROUGH AIRBNB. If the host asks you to move to personal e-mail or that you send them a check or pay by PayPal, it may be a scam—it's a lot harder to get Airbnb's help when you don't have a paper trail of communications or payments through its site.

IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, THEY'VE GOT YOUR BACK. If you can't get into the place, the host cancels within 24 hours of your stay, or the place doesn't look as promised, don't deal with the host; call Airbnb customer service, open 24/7. They'll offer you a partial or full refund, or find you somewhere comparable to stay.

"TRAVEL IS FATAL TO PREJUDICE, BIGOTRY, AND NARROW-MINDEDNESS."

—MARK TWAIN

"When we get out of the glass bottles of our ego, / and when we escape like squirrels from turning in the cages of our personality / and get into the forest again, / we will shiver with cold and fright / but things will happen to us / so that we don't know ourselves. Cool, unlying life will rush in..."

—D. H. LAWRENCE

WHY WE TRAVEL

"Traveling is a brutality. It forces you to trust strangers and to lose sight of all that familiar comfort of home and friends. You are constantly off balance. Nothing is yours except the essential things—air, sleep, dreams, the sea, the sky—all things tending towards the eternal or what we imagine of it."

—CESARE PAVESE

"People travel to faraway places to watch, in fascination, the kind of people they ignore at home." —DAGOBERT D. RUNES

"The first condition of understanding a foreign country is to smell it." —T. S. ELIOT

WHERE TO BE DEBAUCHEOUS AND WHERE TO RECOVER ACROSS THE WORLD

BECAUSE EVERY GOOD PARTY SHOULD BE CHASED WITH PAMPERING



KOH PHANGAN, THAILAND

FOR DEBAUCHERY: The monthly Full Moon Party, started in the late '80s, has grown to crowds of 30,000 inebriated tourists on the beach, watching jugglers and fire-eaters.

FOR RECOVERY: A week at the Sanctuary, a resort on the island that focuses on detoxification through fasts, cleanses, colonics, and yoga.



SAN JUAN DEL SUR, NICARAGUA

FOR DEBAUCHERY: Sign up for the Sunday Funday Pool Crawl, which takes you pool-hopping around the city until sunrise, all while a towering statue of Christ looks over you.

FOR RECOVERY: A massage at Pelican Eyes Resort & Spa that uses pineapple and papaya, which have natural anti-inflammatory properties to help with postdrinking puffiness.



NUSA DUA, BALI, INDONESIA

FOR DEBAUCHERY: Raise a glass to Vegas-style dancers at the cabaret show at Sol Beach House Benoa.

FOR RECOVERY: Shock your system back to normal by jumping between hot and cold soaking pools at the luxury resort Mulia Bali, and then chill out in the 30 degree chakra-balancing ice room.



REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND

FOR DEBAUCHERY: Join the *runtur*, an all-night bar crawl that ends with a stop at a hot-dog stand to soak up all the Black Death (shots of Brennivín Icelandic schnapps) you drank.

FOR RECOVERY: Soak up the healing properties of the Blue Lagoon, where you can book a floating massage.

Thanks to travel writer Alexandra Baackes at Alex in Wonderland.

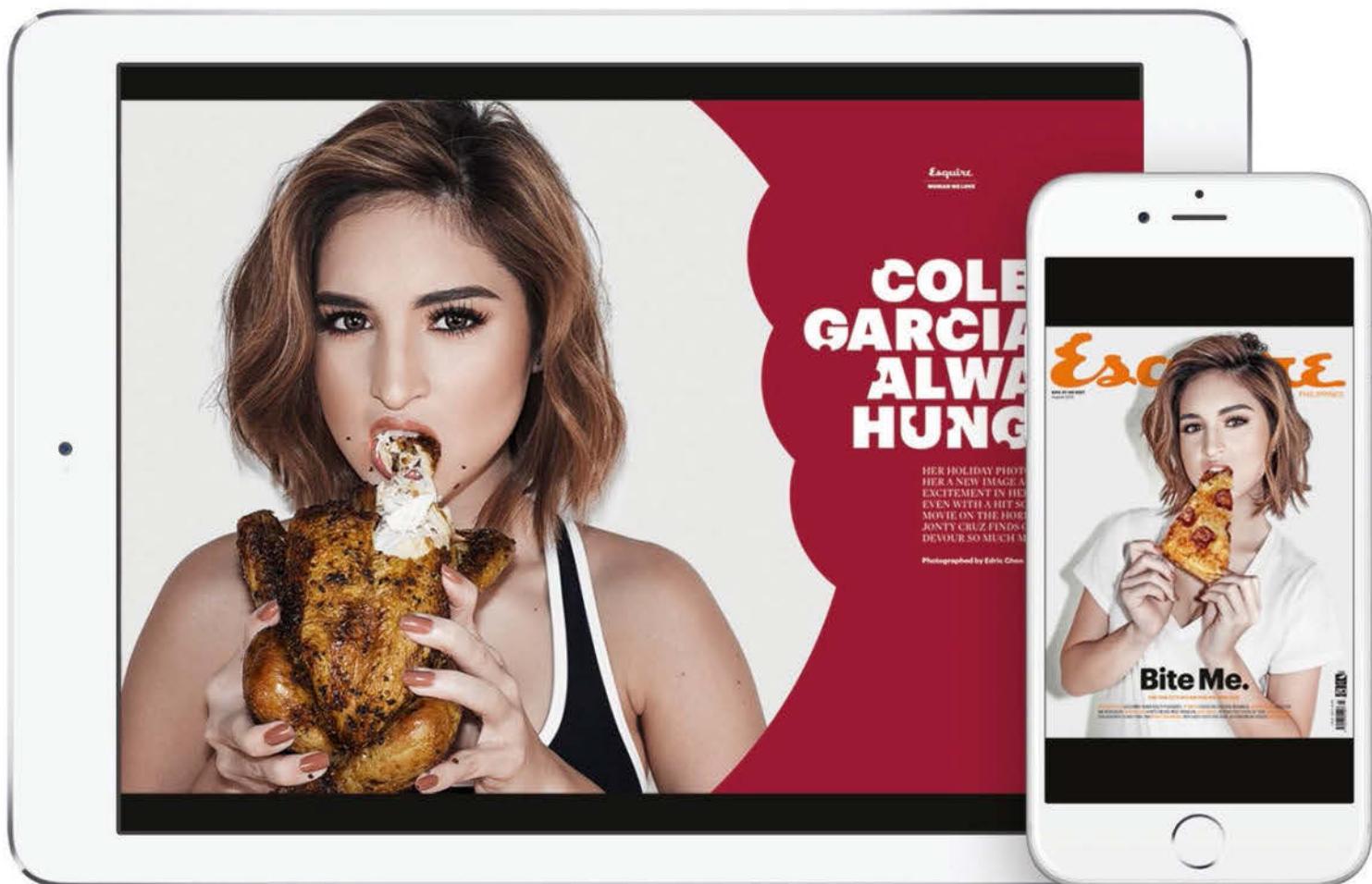
"And if travel is like love, it is, in the end, mostly because it's a heightened state of awareness, in which we are mindful, receptive, undimmed by familiarity and ready to be transformed. That is why the best trips, like the best love affairs, never really end." —PICO IYER

"To awaken quite alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world." —FREYA STARK

"People travel to faraway places to watch, in fascination, the kind of people they ignore at home."

—DAGOBERT D. RUNES

THE SOPHISTICATED MAN'S HANDBOOK TO MATTERS OF SOCIETY, STYLE AND CULTURE.



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AUGUST 2015

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ON CULINARY OUTREACH

EDITED BY SARGE LACUESTA
ARTWORK BY EVERYWHERE WE SHOOT

NOTES & ESSAYS

THE CRISPY PATA STEPS UP

The crispy pata has come a long way from an attempt to feed a gang with an ignored ingredient to a staple in Philippine cuisine.

TONICO MANAHAN

There doesn't seem anything particularly noble about a crispy *pata*. Rather than something knightly or gentlemanly, the thought of crispy pata evokes visions of primeval gorging—using bare hands, tearing skin and meat straight off the bone, oblivious of manners and with the single minded intention of wolfing down more.

Filipinos cannot claim to be the first to savor pork knuckles. Germans have always had their famous *Eisbein* (ice leg) or a boiled pickled pork knuckle. In the past few decades the Germans have been also serving a baked knuckle with a crisp skin.

The popular crispy *pata* origin story is that

a young son of a restaurant owner was censured for overfeeding his friends, and was only allowed by his mother to continue to feed them discarded pork knuckles. Necessity being the mother of invention, Mr. Rod Ongpauco invented crispy pata by deep-frying the knuckle after a prolonged tenderizing simmer. The result was a revelation, a crisp thin skin that encased a sticky gelatinous succulent tender interior of fat and meat. An alternative story has Ongpauco's mother, Mama Chit, inventing the dish. Either story being true it is not disputed that from its inception in 1958, the Ongpaucos built a formidable restaurant empire called Barrio Fiesta, often pairing the crispy *pata* with *kare kare* (oxtail and tripe stew with vegetables and an achiote colored peanut sauce).

In the '80s habitués of a certain motel chain would be treated to a complimentary crispy *pata*. While inflation and increased competition have taken away the complimentary crispy pata, to this day some people claim that certain motels serve the best version of the dish.

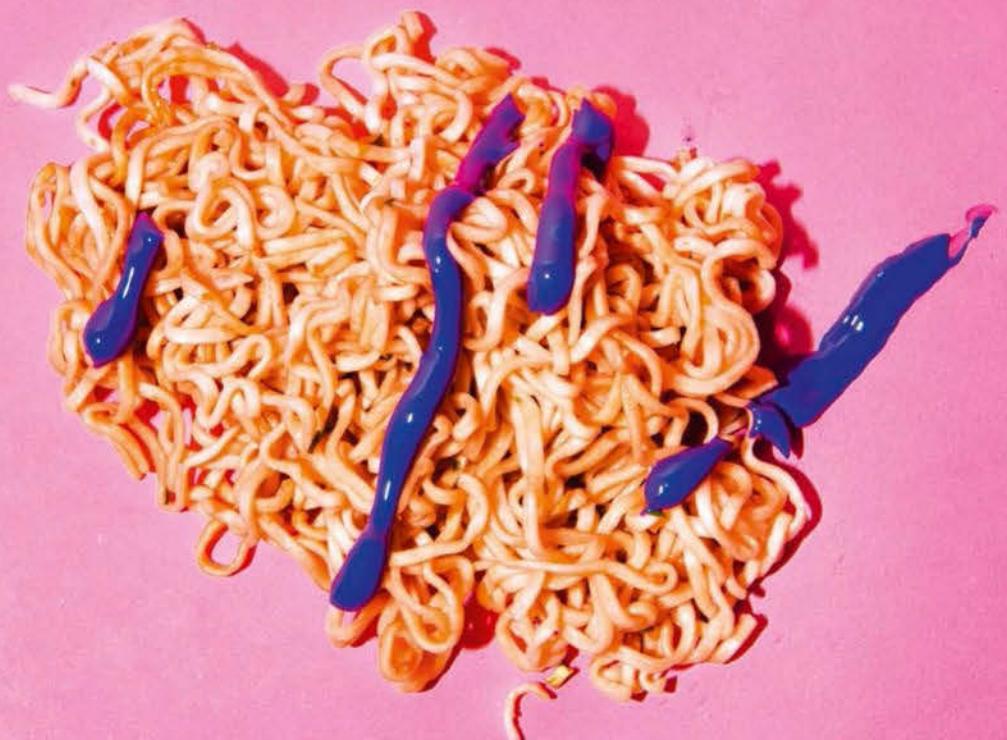
Another notable crispy pata is the one served in the long tenured restaurant in Makati Medical Center's Floating Island. Often paired with *adobo* rice, many patrons would fearlessly indulge in the dish knowing that many doctors were nearby and that the emergency room was always open.

Something as delicious as crispy *pata* couldn't possibly be good for your health. Yet, during the heyday of high protein diets, the uninitiated flock that dove into the trend without proper guidance would ingest copious amounts of fat and protein. What would be a better diet food than a crispy *pata* with vegetables on the side? Eventually the fat conscious diet crowd once again eschewed fat along with carbs and limited their portions.

The only trendy place of memory that was known for their crispy pata was Faces, a club that lived through two separate locations and was the epicenter of Manila's posh nightlife scene for over a decade. It seemed incongruous to serve it in a dance club where the main attraction was watching people. Sticky fingers and dancing didn't seem to go together but the Faces location that is now Ayala museum had a large lounge area where people would indulge in specialties, which also included *bulalo* (boiled beef shank soup), and baby back ribs among others. Their version of crispy *pata* had the meat marinated or brined to the point that it was like eating corned meat.

While many establishments would get crispy pata right, many would go wrong. The essence of the dish is the contrast between the crisp exterior and the succulent interior. The most common faux pas would be to overcook the dish until everything is crisp and the meat becomes a desiccated, inedible mass.

The next mistake would be to debone the *pata* prior to cooking. Many restaurants have done this in the vain hope of elevating it to something that it's not—an elegant dish. Few



chefs can do this properly. In my opinion it results in a loss of flavor and moisture.

Since every Filipino restaurant tends to have a version of the dish, many freeze the pre-simmered knuckle in preparation for deep-frying; because of this a common mistake is serving the dish with a cold interior. Biting into unanticipated cold collagen and fat along with room temperature skin that needs further crisping is disgusting.

Perhaps the most disgusting faux pas would

be serving a crispy *pata* with pig hair still intact. I've often sent back a dish that needed a trip to the barber. I don't know why but certain traditional German chefs would serve the dish with unshaven hair near the hooves. Perhaps it's like the Spanish tradition of keeping the hair near the hooves of high quality *jamón* to boast of the quality of the breed used for the ham. I can state with all certainty that when it comes to crispy *pata*, bald is definitely beautiful.

Rather than focus on the negative, let's look at the variations of the dish developed by many inventive cooks. Not many people remember Tito Rey's, the former partner of The LJC Group of Companies. The restaurant Ang Hang, which I believe was originally a collaboration of the two groups, developed a dish called Knock Out Knuckles, a version that is topped with golden fried garlic and sliced chilies. Knock Out Knuckles was declared as the greatest pork knuckle dish by Madhur Jaffrey (the noted food expert and author) and the late great Doreen G. Fernandez. While Knock out Knuckles appears in the menu of several LJC Group outlets, another version called TKO is served in Kuya's, a restaurant on Bayani Road, Taguig, owned and operated by Chito Bautista who together with his brother Rey ran Tito Rey's in the 1980s. The jury is still out on which knuckle is better.

Many chefs have experimented with variations on the sauces of crispy *pata*. The traditional sauce would be a soy sauce with onions brunoise, garlic, and a little sugar. I've seen variations with peanut sauce, *bagoong*, and concentrated *adobo*. Some work some don't. I guess it depends on a diner's mood or preference.

Some chefs experiment with the kind of pork: a restaurant called Livestock currently has been hailed by the blogosphere to have the best crispy *pata*. It's cut with a Popsicle stick, manifesting crispness of the skin and tenderness of the meat. This is a new tradition that echoes the Spanish tradition of cutting a *cochinillo* with a saucer. While the chef claims to have perfected the technique, it's clear that a large factor of the superior quality of the dish is the high quality of the pork used. This restaurant exerts effort in choosing the ingredient used.

Chef Jay Gamboa of El Cirkulo and Café J uses a baby *pata* leg to create a dish called a Patita. The result is a leaner *pata* that does not sacrifice succulence.

Some chefs have produced versions of the dish that should be remembered despite their no longer being available. Chef Katrina Kuhn Alcantara's short stint as the chef of the Alpha at Alpha Land South Gate Mall was noted for selling a goose-fat fried crispy *pata*.

The Writer's Lounge at the Raffles Makati, through the creative genius of Chef Robert Bolanos, once boasted a crispy *pata* which seemed to be produced using molecular gastronomy, vacuum marinated (the flavor thoroughly seeped throughout the meat) and served with a dehydrated powder sauce that had flavor notes of soy sauce, garlic, and vinegar.

The crispy *pata* has come a long way from an attempt to feed a gang with an ignored ingredient to a staple in Philippine cuisine. Now that the rest of the world is beginning to notice Philippine cuisine, who knows what version of the dish might gain international renown?

TONICO MANAHAN

Lawyer, art patron, man about town

FAREWELL TO FAST FOOD

The combination of eating and reading was deadly, each pleasure feeding into the other when combined, becoming irresistible.

LUIS KATIGBAK

Like many great loves, my relationship with fast food is both epic and deeply tragic: I desire it beyond all reason, and it's killing me.

Early in my existence, I realized that life held two great pleasures for me: reading and eating. (Other pleasures would follow, but they were generally less reliable, or more obviously complicated.) My history is thus littered with happy childhood memories involving reading material and junk food: consuming butter-and-sugar sandwiches while reading *Iron Man* comics at my cousin Miguel's, snacking on crackers and Carol-Ann onion dip while reading computer magazines, and best of all, a trip to the comics shop on my 10th birthday with my father, who afterwards took me to Magoo's in Magallanes to eat pizza while I thrilled to the latest issue of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. (I was not much of a conversationalist then—especially with a comic book in my hands—and it could not have been a very interesting afternoon for my father, and I love him all the more for it.)

The combination of eating and reading was deadly, each pleasure feeding into the other when combined, becoming irresistible. Not that eating was not a potent enough pleasure on its own. We are hardwired to enjoy ridiculous concentrations of salt, sugar, and fat—our brains light up for these substances the way they do for illegal, addictive drugs—and it is very hard to resist the allure of fast food, especially considering its availability.

Highly processed junk has been there for me at every stage of my life. The story goes that someone, on a lark, once put a bit of Chippy—ah, classic Pinoy snack food!—in my mouth when I was a baby, and that I immediately beamed in sheer pre-verbal joy. (That, apparently, is my Secret Origin.) The first thing I bought when I earned my own money was a can of Pringles that I could have all to myself. (When I was growing up, in our household Pringles were rationed on snack nights, with a two-inch stack allotted per family member.) I made myself sick cramming it down in one sitting. And when I started living on my own, fast food delivery became a daily—sometimes thrice-daily—ritual. I saw the Shakey's driver more often than I saw my own girlfriend.



In high school and college, I discovered something that went almost as well with fast food as comics did: friends. When I think of myself and my barkada, I think of us in food courts and burger joints and pizza parlors, quaffing obscene amounts of soda and methodically making our way through those little booklets of 25-peso Meal Deals. We had the appetites of swine and the metabolisms of wolverines. We ate at the Burger Machine near school so often that they knew us by our names and our preferences (a "Luis Special" was three Bart Burgers with cheese). My friend JB and I almost put a Pizza Hut out of business without even trying; it was their folly to have an All You Can Eat promo in a mall that we frequented. One day we dropped by with a freshly-bought stack of comics and ate and read, and read

and ate, until between the two of us we had eaten enough for over five extended families and our waiter was begging us with his eyes to Please For the Love of God, Stop.

As fun as these events are to recall, this is not, as you may have guessed, a story with a happy ending. In fact you may have already guessed that it ends in the D word: Diabetes. (Or to be more dramatic about it, Death, which will follow sooner or later.) Part of this was due to sheer ignorance; I knew enough to avoid sweets, on the whole, but I was in my thirties by the time I learned about the evils that carbs could wreak on my system, at which point I had pretty much eaten many metric tons of carbs. (Unbelievably, the insert that came with my first diabetic meds still recommended a high-carb diet; such knowledge was slow to catch on.) And though a



friend of mine chalks up my condition solely to decades of idiotic foodchoices, there is the matter of genetic propensity as well. Diabetes runs in the family; my mother died from its resulting complications just last year.

Soon after my mother passed away, I learned that Magoo's Pizza—one of the major comfort foods of my childhood, always saved for special occasions—still existed, and that their Eastwood branch would deliver to my apartment. I took to ordering a large pizza from them every day, split into two flavors (usually the Joey's Special and the Famous Combination), extra cheese on everything, and consuming it by myself, unwitnessed by anyone except God, not unlike an alcoholic drinking himself to death. My condition, predictably, worsened.

At some point my problems with my kid-

neys, my circulation, and my retinopathy necessitated new medical intervention. Dr. S (who prefers not to be named) was approximately the sixth or seventh physician I sought to save me. Unlike all the others, in addition to performing procedures and prescribing meds, she put me on a strict diet, or rather, a complete change of eating habits meant to last the rest of my life. No junk, obviously; and no meat, no dairy, no sugar, no white carbs, not even fruit—just vegetables, unpolished rice, and the occasional unfarmed fish. Progress has been slow—right now I can barely walk, and barely see—but I consider it a small miracle that I haven't had a stroke yet, nor do I require dialysis, and God willing, I am getting better by increments. I think if not for this doctor, I might not be alive to write these words right now.

The sad and funny thing is that I still find it hard to regret my history of eating, bound up as those memories are with times spent with family and friends, and the power of stories. I remember *Endless Quest* books and Big 20 burgers. Ordering an Oz pizza with my Kuya while Mom was in the Showcase beauty parlor next door. Getting brain freeze from a Coke-flavored Icee from the machine in South Supermarket. Good times, well before the health and money worries of adulthood. Good times, that I will never have again. “I’m never going to eat the way I used to, am I, doctor?” I asked my doctor wistfully, just the other day. She looked at me with a straight face and said, “No one should ever eat the way that you used to.”

LUIS KATIGBAK
Esquire editor



MEAT IS MURDER; TASTY, TASTY MURDER

I realized that humanity wasn't worth saving, at least not by me.

YVETTE TAN

The hardest thing to give up was steak.

I was in third year high school when I decided to become a pescetarian. I read how if everyone were vegetarian, we would have enough land and crops to ensure that no one in the whole wide world would go hungry. I was young. I wanted to save the world. I cut out beef, chicken, pork—anything that lived on land—reasoning that I would eventually stop eating seafood. I was a vegetarian for a week. I was a pescetarian for 10 years.

FISH AND CHICKEN AREN'T "MEAT"

The thing about deciding not to eat meat in the Philippines in the 90s is that it was bad enough that you didn't have many culinary options, what makes it worse is that nobody understands what you're doing, automatically labeling you “crazy” for daring to go against the norm. I wasn't a preachy vegetarian; I believe that people should be free to eat what they want, or don't want, as long as they don't get in other people's faces about it. I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible, given the circumstances, such as asking for a fast food sandwich to be prepared without meat and be willing to pay full price for it, just going for the vegetables at a party, or telling people in

advance about my dietary concerns.

But while I was trying to quietly live a dietary lifestyle of my choosing while inconveniencing as few people as possible, everyone else thought it was their duty to impress on me their opinions on how insane I was. This ranged from bafflement to derision to uneducated concern to insignificance. Surely my not eating meat wasn't serious, right? The staff at McDonald's gave me weird looks when I would order a Big Mac without the patties (it was the only sandwich in the chain at that time with vegetables). Family members assumed that chicken didn't count as meat, and tried to feed it to me every chance they got. Complete strangers would lecture me on how I was depriving myself of nutrients. On a school trip, the organizer completely forgot to have vegetarian food ready for me, even though I had been telling her about my dietary needs for weeks; she was too busy flirting with, well, everybody. When I started working for a TV show, I had to eat whatever was served on location, which more than once meant a cup of plain white rice because everyone was having a Jollibee meal. I remember being accosted more than one in church by well-meaning members extolling the virtues of eating meat. It didn't matter that I still ate seafood; water-animals weren't considered meat. Heck, even chicken wasn't considered meat. Won't I at least eat chicken? You can imagine the frustration I lived with on what I don't

think would be an exaggeration of I said a daily basis. But still I persisted, because eating less meat was something I believed in and because, in my own small, perhaps insignificant way, I was doing something for mankind.

Did I miss meat? Of course I did. I missed steak and bacon and Peking duck. I missed corned beef and Vienna sausages and Kentucky Fried Chicken (before it was KFC). Steak was what I missed the most. I would not be exaggerating if I said that I love steak. Give me a hunk of barely cooked prime rib and I'm a happy camper. In fact, it was my love for steak that indirectly led me to appreciate vegetables.

STEAK: THE GATEWAY TO VEGETABLE LOVE

Let me explain: Growing up, my dad used to take us to Steak Town, a kitschy, Western-themed restaurant dressed up like a saloon, complete with bull horns, a piano player, and placemats decorated with posters from the old West. Steak was simply beef—not Angus, definitely not Wagyu—served on a sizzling plate next to a scoop of mashed potato and some steamed vegetables, after which a waiter would come by and pour gravy—thick, regular gravy, just one kind of gravy—onto the whole thing. It was magical. I loved it. I learned to associate Steak Town with happy memories, which naturally led me to associ-

ate steak with good times as well. Of course, it helped that steak was delicious. It was, and always will be, my favorite food.

I didn't start life as a big vegetable eater. Vegetable dishes at home were sad, sorry things that were either steamed or sautéed; and always, always overcooked. They usually had zero appeal, unless they were accidentally left crisp, or were really meant to be served mushy. I was not a fan, but that was all I knew about vegetables, that they were gross, colorless things that were supposed to be good for you, in the way that all things good for you were apt to be gross.

At Steak Town, I of course, devoured everything on my plate. Who doesn't love mashed potatoes, especially doused in gravy? And the vegetables, though probably frozen, were a small delight—crunchy and bite-sized, providing textural contrast. I began to notice people congregating at a small booth on one side of the restaurant. I ambled over to investigate; turns out the booth was a salad bar where people made their own salad. There was iceberg lettuce, carrots, cucumber, tomatoes, young corn, and croutons. Since this was the '80s, Thousand Island dressing reigned supreme, though there were other dressings and vinaigrettes there as well.

I loved the idea of being able to do your own thing, of taking command of your food, of deciding how little or how much I would be able to put on my plate. But most of all, I



was enamored with the dressing. Though this may cost me some friends, I'm going to come out and says that I am a mayonnaise fiend, and as a child, this translated into a love for Thousand Island dressing. But to get to all of that creamy, ketchup-mayonnaise-relishy glop without looking like an idiot, I knew that I had to cover my tracks and pretend to eat vegetables. So I made my first salad, and I loved it. The crunch of fresh vegetables, the smooth fatty slide of the dressing that coated them, I was in heaven. I had found my new favorite food next to steak, and it was a fresh vegetable salad. I was so in love with salad that I spent one summer eating nothing but lettuce and dressing and maybe some carrots if I was feeling fancy, just because I thought it was fun. This is also why it was fairly easy for me to cut out pork, chicken, beef, and other land-dwelling animals after I had weaned myself away from steak.

THAT WEEK I WENT VEGETARIAN

Did going full vegetarian ever cross my mind? Of course it did. Water creatures are animals too, and lessening fishing and farming would also go a long way in securing the welfare of human beings. But I also knew that I couldn't do it. I admired people who were vegetarian, even vegan, but I was weak in that aspect, my selfish need for easy flavor outshining even my most noble intentions. Still, I was always wondering if I could make the leap. I promised myself no flesh for a week, a week that I still look back on with regret. It was in the summer, where I spent most of the time at home, thus having control over my meals. It was easy to turn down fried bangus and tuyo, even though I loved them.

Things hit a snag when we ate out; my dad's best friend was in town, and we treated him to a small Chinese lauriat lunch, which featured mantis shrimp, then a rare delicacy. If you've ever partaken of a Chinese lauriat, you know that it is made up mostly of meat and seafood, with dessert being the only truly flesh-free dish. I sat there as everyone feasted on jellyfish and crab. Even the vegetables were off-limits, as they were covered in oyster sauce. When the mantis shrimp arrived, I almost cried. How I wanted to dig into that firm, yet yielding flesh and suck on its juices. Instead, I held firm, watching as everyone ate, citing a stomach ache when asked why I wasn't partaking of the feast. I lived through the week as a true vegetarian, albeit a miserable one, and have since sworn to myself never to go through that ordeal again.

THE SIDE EFFECTS OF GOING PESCETARIAN

Slight emotional harassment aside, there were other side effects to cutting out land-dwelling animals from my diet. I lost 30 lbs in six months, felt lighter, felt better. In fact, I lost

so much weight that I wasn't allowed to give blood to my uncle because I was "too light." To a kid who's been overweight for as long as she can remember, this was mind-blowing.

I mostly ate vegetables, saving seafood for special occasions, because I liked preparing my meals and would only work with vegetables because they were easier for me to flavor. I wasn't physically active and didn't cut down on sugar (which, in hindsight, I should have). In other words, the weight loss was accidental, the better well-being even more so. I'm not saying that cutting out meat is for everyone, but it worked exceptionally well for me. But as the years went on, the small psychological traumas, much like a drop of water falling every second on your forehead, began to outweigh the physical benefits. And so, after ten years of standing up for something I believed in, I slowly transitioned back into eating meat.

BACK TO BEEF

With it came weight gain and a feeling of heaviness, which may or may not have contributed to the depression I've had all my life, but at least I got to eat steak. I ate so much steak (probably to make up for 10 years without it), that I became known for it. And when people find out that I was pescatarian for a decade, they are incredulous. They ask me how it felt.

This is what I tell them: It felt good at first, crusading for a cause. It's something you do in your teens and early twenties: suffering painfully, in loneliness, for something you believe in—love, art, philosophy. But it slowly began to grate on me, how everyone kept poking their noses into my business, how what I chose to put into my body became cause for debate, even derision. It made me second guess my reason for giving up bacon, for giving up Kentucky Fried Chicken, for giving up steak. Ten years of not sitting down to a breakfast of crisp bacon, of not savoring it as it yields its flavors in my mouth, of not leaving the table with the oily sheen of it resting on my lips.

I realized that humanity wasn't worth saving, at least not by me. And so I started eating meat again, even though to this day, I get a headache half the time I ingest the flesh of something that dwelt on land. There are many things that are wrong with this world. But bacon, bacon is good. Steak is better. Both were good before they got appropriated into everything, and will continue to be good after the fad passes. Because there is flavor in fat, and life is too short to be lived without flavor.

The one good thing about a decade without meat is now, whenever vegetarians try to make me feel guilty because of my food choices, I have the right to kick them. After all, if I can spend 10 years quietly living my dietary choices, why can't they?

YVETTE TAN
Fictionist and essayist

IV THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Tourism and economics and money and marketing efforts aside, would it really be so bad if the world never fell head over heels for Filipino cuisine?

NIGELLA LUZON

The Wall Street Journal once called Filipino food Southeast Asia's most misunderstood cuisine. The article itself, published in 2008, positively highlights Abe, Cirkulo, and Salcedo Market, but it begins with this: "While Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, and Malaysia are foodie destinations, the Philippines is often stereotyped as the home of *balut* and Jollibee."

That was in 2008. Seven years later, has that general perception changed? Given how often the food industry discusses how or why Filipino cuisine has been so overlooked compared to its other Southeast Asian brethren, apparently not. And as in years past, there are the same reasons and excuses being bandied about, and none of them still hold much water. Filipino food is always smothered in sauce and it isn't colorful like Vietnamese cuisine, they say. Others insist that local restaurants can never quite capture the excellence of your mother's or your lola's home cooking. (Plus points for sentimentality, but we have some truly exceptional chefs and restaurants in the country, so this is not true at all.) It's a common source of frustration for Pinoy chefs and food enthusiasts, which is why every time a foreign chef or authority on food comes over for a visit, they are inevitably bombarded with these questions: What do you think of Filipino food? Which Filipino restaurants have you tried? Why hasn't Filipino cuisine been successful on a global scale? What are we doing wrong? Why won't they love us?

It's embarrassing to see this play out—putting a well-meaning foreigner on the spot, asking them these questions and giving them a glimpse of our inferiority complex. They don't know the answers any better than we do, but perhaps the bigger and more important issue here is: why even ask them these questions and invite them to our pity party? Why does outside approval matter to us so much? The obvious (and unabashedly nationalistic) answer is that we love our country, we love our food, and we want everyone else to love it too. Every article from a foreign website or broadsheet that declares this is the year our cuisine makes it big is furiously shared on Twitter and Facebook. "Yes, finally!

What took them so long to come around?" Blog posts that deride our national dishes or even express confusion over Jollibee's offerings go viral and their authors subsequently cyber-bullied, as if we still haven't learned that taste is purely subjective. Filipino food is wonderful in so many ways, but that doesn't mean everyone else absolutely has to love it, and we certainly don't have to hunt these people down with pitchforks and burn them at the stake if they don't.

At some point, this obsessive longing for the day that Filipino food finally "makes it" begins to seem futile. How will we even know when we've made it? Will we be led

considered an insult and not a compliment, but with millions of Filipinos based abroad, certainly our own people would form a viable and most welcome customer base. If a piping hot bowl of *sinigang* or a plate of *palabok* can bring comfort and joy to a homesick Pinoy who hasn't seen his family in months, that's a pretty noble accomplishment in and of itself, and it should carry as much weight—if not more—as the seal of approval of people who are unfamiliar with our cuisine.

When will we be good enough for ourselves?

We are a nation of contradictions, one that trumpets homegrown talent but also celebrates the arrival of each new foreign

tinguished if you share a hundred BuzzFeed listicles about "delicious Filipino foods you need in your life." You're preaching to the choir; chances are, the people who will end up clicking "like" on the link you shared are Pinoys too. Waging wars with anonymous trolls in the comments section, all in the name of defending the Philippines (whether it's our cuisine or something else under fire) won't make a difference either.

The most legitimate reason why we should care so much about what the world thinks about Filipino food is not the hope that we will someday make it (whatever that even means). It's because this global perception of our cuisine has a direct effect on our nation's economic success, especially in terms of tourism. Food is the best ambassador for any country, and the easiest way to relate to and understand a culture. But the restaurant industry is a public relations game on a global level too, not to mention one that requires significant financial investment. In 2002, Thailand launched its Global Thai program to increase the number of Thai restaurants worldwide, effectively doubling its numbers. Korean, Malaysian, and Taiwanese governments have all sunk serious cash into similar programs, with varying levels of success. Singapore has gotten wildly creative with its efforts. They came up with Singapore Takeout, a customized shipping container that transforms into a pop-up kitchen. They took this on a whirlwind tour around the world, with a battalion of the island nation's most distinguished chefs cooking and conducting demonstrations everywhere from Paris to Sydney. Even Singapore's events like the recent World Street Food Congress (where the Philippines was represented) are aimed at driving tourism to the country itself.

So maybe it's not our food, but the way the game is played. As with most things in this world, it all comes down to marketing in the end. But hey, we've got a few aces up our sleeve. After all, we were doing nose-to-tail cooking before it was even considered cool. And if countries like Thailand and Cambodia can make eating insects look somewhat appealing, the same can probably be done for *balut*.

But tourism and economics and money and marketing efforts aside, would it really be so bad if the world never fell head over heels for Filipino cuisine? We've become fixated on attaining this level of indefinable success, but maybe we're destined to be the culinary dark horse of the world. Maybe they'll never love us back and welcome us with open arms. And that's okay. Time to quit throwing pity parties and whining about how overlooked we are. Because if we're as proud of our national cuisine as we say we are, then we should be okay on our own. And if we still need some foreign stamp of approval to validate ourselves, well, then that's the real problem.

NIGELLA LUZON
Former food magazine editor



out of a subterranean cellar, eyes blinking as they adjust to light, and see our Thai, Korean, Vietnamese brethren welcoming us into the fold? Bring out the *lechon*, for at long last, our overlooked cuisine joins them on the world stage! Will it be determined by the number of Michelin stars our country has amassed, or the number of Filipino restaurants on the World's 50 Best list? These supposedly prestigious lists have seen their fair share of backlash, and besides, food is not made great because an elite jury decides it is so.

But when Filipino restaurants open abroad, a risky gamble and a considerable achievement, they are sometimes criticized and ridiculed for only catering to Filipino customers. "Puro Pilipino lang kumakain doon" is

franchise that makes it harder for local businesses to compete. We'll pay more for imported produce but we're not willing to shell out as much for locally grown ingredients. The tide is turning and we've made significant strides, but we have a long way to go. We are at this strange intersection of being shouting-from-the-rooftops proud to be Pinoy and being suckers for anything foreign. But if we took those best practices from abroad and applied them here—and if we stopped asking foreign chefs about what we're doing wrong and instead tried to learn from what they're doing right—we could make significant progress.

And yet most of us haven't done much except armchair evangelization. Let's get real—Filipino food will not become any more dis-

IT'S THE GLOW
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CHANGE YOU.

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STYLEAGENDA

REST IN LUXURY

Jean-Marie Massaud offers a refined, informal interpretation of the Archibald Gran project: The **Archibald Gran Comfort** chair under Poltrona Frau. Its central element is its large seat cushion: a luxurious and soft leather sack filled with generous goose down padding, an element to contrast the architectural style of the steel chair frame. The Archibald Gran Comfort has four feet that are rendered in steel, but with the gracefulness of a pencil sketch. The chair's trim is embellished by raw cut leather, hand painted and finished with contrast stitching. For a look at the most luxurious of furniture, including those of Poltrona Frau, visit **Furnitalia** at 30th Street corner Rizal Drive, Crescent Park, West Bonifacio Global City.



CONNECTED CARRY ALL

Moleskine expands its Traveling Collection with the release of a new line of bags conceived for creativity and productivity on the move. Designed with their contents in mind, the new containers are defined by what they carry. Every detail of the models—Messenger, Backpack, Tote, Reporter, and Shoulder Bag—has been designed to carry and protect the contents. The exterior recalls Moleskine notebooks with an elastic band and minimal aesthetic. Adjustable shoulder straps give a better fit, with shoulder pads and concealable waist straps offering extra comfort. Metal snap-hooks and eyelets as well as exterior pockets give quick access to important tools.

Meanwhile, the interior comprises a variety of compartments, loops and pockets specifically designed to fit essential on-the-road items, with a colored lining to ease finding things in a rush. The myCloud Collection and video will be launching at store.lifestylebrands.com.ph and Pismo Digital Lifestyle.



COMFORT FIRST

Never have to choose between style and comfort. Spanish brand **Flossy** is a footwear brand that puts one ahead without compromising the other. Its range of plimsolls and slip-ons are incredibly easy to wear and comfortable, while still maintaining a foot forward in fashion. That's in part due to the fun, carefree, and positive spirit that leads its design principles. The brand prompts everyone to #JustSayHola—with hopes of inspiring people to greet everything that life has to offer with a warm hello. For more information, check out Flossy on Facebook at facebook.com/flossyfootwearph, and on Instagram at @flossyfootwearph. Flossy is available at SM The Block, Ayala Alabang Town Center, ResToeRun, Bratback, Chimes Felcris in Davao, Streetshop in Iligan, First Modern in Zamboanga, and online at Zalora.



TAKE NOTE

Urban Super Hero Batman enters the realm of the **Moleskine** notebook in a new Limited Edition collection. Created in close collaboration with Warner Bros. Consumer Products, on behalf of DC Entertainment, the four themed notebooks celebrate Gotham City and the mysterious identity of its most well-known inhabitant. Each piece bears unique artworks that frame the caped crusader in classic black and white. A fifth notebook featuring artwork from the graphic novel *The Dark Knight Returns* on its cover and flyleaves has also been released, exclusively available on official Moleskine eCommerce sites and stores worldwide in a numbered run of 5,000. Their ivory-colored pages can store all manner of intimate thoughts; from character sketches and cultivated personas to vigilante tactics and secret identities. Keep an eye on local Moleskine retailers for new designs.



WIN AGAINST GUNK AND CORROSION

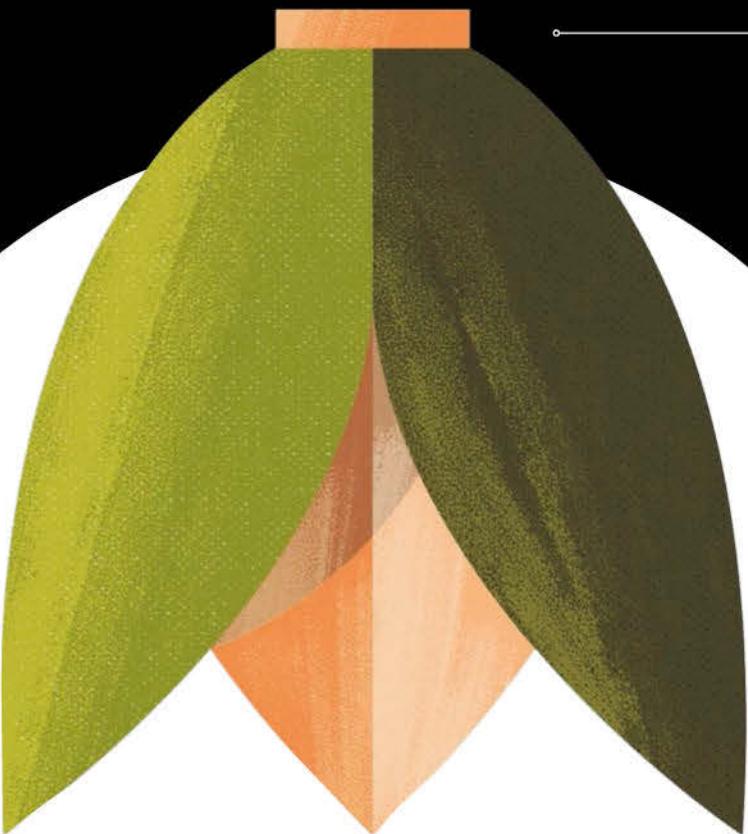
Shell V-Power Nitro+ Premium Performance Fuels are formulated with a powerful cleaning agent designed to prevent and remove performance-robbing engine deposits that cause gunk and corrosion.

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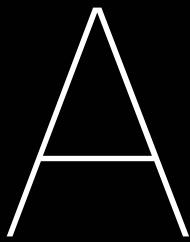


THE FUTURE OF FOOD

FROM A TO Z:

Food intel that every
epicurean should know.

Text Kissa Castañeda
Illustration Dan Matutina



ADLAI

This little known grain is love at first bite for both chefs and curious eaters. Abundant in Mindanao and brought to the spotlight by the Department of Agriculture's Berna Romulo-Puyat, Adlai (or Job's Tears) was the star ingredient at this year's Madrid Fusion Manila (MFM). Everyone was singing praises for this versatile alternative to rice and corn, especially those who were able to try Tippi Tambunting's dish at MFM, which paired this springy grain with juicy pork belly.

BIODYNAMIC AGRICULTURE

Being organic isn't enough anymore, especially when the word is overused and often abused for marketing purposes. While the principles behind biodynamic farming have been around since the 1920s—it refers to creating a diversified, balanced and natural ecosystem in which to raise produce—it has only gained widespread traction fairly recently. Taste the difference when you order produce from Holy Carabao, the forward-thinking, healthy food purveyor that is an advocate of this movement in the Philippines.



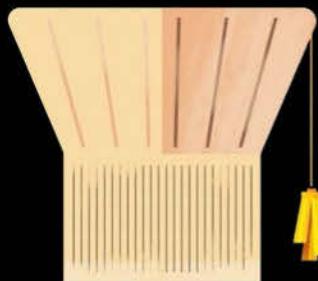
CALAMANSI

I'll go straight to the point: calamansi is the new yuzu. While

it is ubiquitous to us, it's still pretty exotic for the rest of the world. This small package packs a potent and unique citrus taste that makes it great in anything—as a requisite acid to cut through rich flavors or as a tangy touch in a trendy cocktail. Manille Liqueur de Calamansi has been a big boost to its popularity outside the Philippines, because it has become the go-to gourmet gift to replace the expected, but still delicious, dried mango.

DEATH OF FOOD PORN

Food snobs—those who refuse to eat without white tablecloths or consult the star rating before booking—are a dying breed. Today, it's not about the most expensive or exclusive, but all about the most exotic. We have Bourdain and Zimmern to thank for ushering in this anti-elitist dining movement. The criteria are based on effort: How far did you travel for a true taste of Isaan cuisine? Who never gave up in the search for ingredients to make ghee? These gourmands demand authentic experiences, and are more likely to populate their #foodporn feed with finds from a dingy side street.



EDUCATION

Remember in the early 2000s when the hottest thing was to enroll in culinary school? Well, those who took the gamble are most probably reaping the gains, but we've learned that cooking school isn't just for those who want to make a career in food, but also for home cooks and food lovers who just can't get enough. If you're one of them, visit Casa Artusi, which opened its first

F FOUR HANDS

The saying "too many cooks spoil the broth" does necessarily apply in a world obsessed with collaboration. Four Hands dinners,

where two chefs come together to cook one cohesive meal, have been all the rage. It appealing to both chefs and diners—cooks get to challenge the status quo while hardcore eaters get to try two different cooking styles in one go. The best perceived pairing would be two chefs with opposing styles that hopefully result

in a harmonious synergy. Recent examples of chefs with good chemistry include Richard Ekkebus and Corey Lee, who cooked together at Amber in Hong Kong to promote the latter's book *Benu*, and the pairing of veteran Juan Carlos de Terry with chef of the moment Bruce Ricketts in a collaborative dinner last May.

Asian campus right here on our shores. From pasta making, Italian degustation dinners to an amazing in-house shop, it just goes to show that there's an insatiable appetite for anything food. Not a surprise considering we all have to eat to survive.



GRAND GELINAZ SHUFFLE

The idea sounds preposterous—get the world's top chefs to exchange identities and restaurants for one night only. Then, ask diners to reserve a seat without knowing who'll be cooking. To be fair, neither the chefs nor diners really knew what they were getting (or getting into). But in a time when every course is painstakingly documented on food blogs, being in the dark sounds extremely appetizing and brings back the anticipation that made dining out exciting. Last July 9th, the culinary jetset experienced the Gelinaz shuffle for the first time, the luckiest of who lapped up Noma's Rene Redzepi's cooking at Nahm in Bangkok. Let's hope this becomes an annual event.

HEIRLOOM

That we import rice from our neighboring countries not for the sake of variety, but to be able to meet demand, is a bone of contention in the Philippines. Though we are far from meeting our production targets, it's good that we are finally exploring our "native" form—heirloom rice. The difference in color, taste and texture adds an interesting dimension to this staple; it's also a healthier alternative to the industrially farmed variety. Buy a portion from Legaspi Market or check out Arrozeria, which features heirloom rice from the Cordilleras in their Spanish recipes.



INDIAN BY GAGGAN

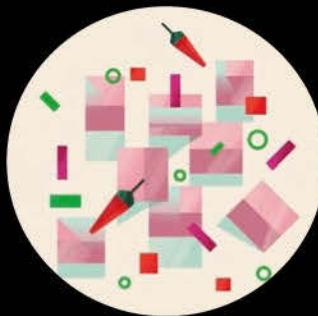
All of us revel in restaurants that have a strong sense of place, but Gaggan, the number one restaurant in this year's Asia's 50 Best Restaurants Awards is far from meeting this criterion. Capitalizing from its unique position—being an Indian restaurant in Bangkok—can only last so long. The

real draw isn't the novel formula or Gaggan's beautiful setting, but the playful, "progressive Indian" cooking of chef Gaggan Anand. Mixing molecular techniques that intensify flavors and offer an element of surprise, both novices and experts on Indian cuisine are in for a revelation. Just make sure you make a reservation.

J

JUNKING JUNK

The farm to fork movement started a concerted push to eliminate, or at least minimize, the prevalence of junk food. If the slumping sales of McDonald's are to be taken as an indication, we've certainly turned a corner when it comes to junking junk. The wellness trend is also due some credit—from natural food to nutraceuticals, we've certainly become more discerning about what we put into our bodies. You are what you eat indeed.



KINILAW

The ambassador of Peruvian cuisine, ceviche has taken over the world with endless variations available from Miami to Manila. Our local version, kinilaw, also instantly impresses—it was the dish that Margarita Fores, Enting Lobaton and Myrna Segismundo presented at Madrid Fusion early this year, received with much acclaim. Instead of leche de

tigre, the various vinegars used to "cook" the raw seafood makes our very own kinilaw stand out. It's a local dish that showcases the beautiful seafood available in the Philippines, while also shining the spotlight on our myriad vinegars.

LIMA

Peru has undoubtedly cemented itself as a culinary destination, and Lima a rightful global food capital. Home of Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants Awards for the past two years (the event is moving to Mexico this year), the city draws plenty of food-loving tourists eager to try out Virgilio Martínez's Central, the number one restaurant on the list. Martínez presents a microcosm of Peru on a plate—making use of indigenous produce that showcases Peru's biodiversity. We should rip a page out of their book on how to promote a country through its food, as well as how to make use of ultra-local produce.

MEXICAN REDUX

From bulgogi beef burritos to scallop uni tostadas, there's no other food that is open to more experimentation but Mexican cuisine. For good reason: Mexican flavors exude pure comfort and its dishes are fairly easy to elevate. Global food lovers search for authenticity, but are also looking for a bit of whimsy; and nothing hits the food g-spot more than a mix of comforting flavours with premium ingredients. Get your fix at Ooma or a bit further, at Chino in Hong Kong.

NUTS

What's driving international chefs nuts? Nothing more than the humble pili nut. Reports from Madrid Fusion Manila say that the pili nut was a revelation for for-

ign chefs, who loved its unique, buttery flavor. It's good news for all of us: apart from being healthy and easily available, the Philippines is one of the few countries in Southeast Asia that commercially produces this nut, making it a big export opportunity.

and entice the uninitiated.

QUINOA

The story of how quinoa came to be a success story illustrates the most important qualities we're looking for in our food—natural, healthy, exotic. Quinoa and other grains have become a staple pantry item for health nuts and incessant eaters, and proves that future food trends will centre on the health aspect. See also: Adlai.

RESERVATIONS PLS.

RESERVATIONS PLEASE

Already know your Chablis from your Chardonnay? Well, level up by mastering another kind of tasting note—that of oysters. Much like wine, the nuances of an oyster's flavor are determined by weather, terroir and farming methods. Get started by bookmarking In a Half Shell and downloading one of the many apps to familiarize yourself with the difference between a Moyasta and Kongai oyster.



PHILIPPINES

Named an "emerging country of influence" in the Future of Food report by marketing communications firm Catch On, the Philippines is on track to be a strong culinary force if we continue to play our cards right. This requires a solid synergy amongst farmers, chefs, and consumers, as well as strong leadership from the government in setting the direction and molding the narrative. The interest is certainly growing, so when people ask you what Filipino food is really like, take on the role of ambassador

S

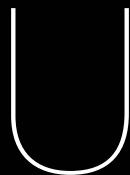
SOUR

Say goodbye to umami, the global taste profile is going sour. Calamansi, vinegar, and other souring agents are having a moment, matched with a growing interest in pickling and fermentation.



THIRD CULTURE COOKING

Some may consider the California Roll an aberration, but this is a prime example of third culture cooking. Mixing cultural influences to a delicious outcome is more than just “fusion”, but recognition of how global food experiences have become. Almost every trendy restaurant features a multicultural slant—visit Your Local and 12/10 to have a proper taste. Sriracha mayo, anyone?



ULTRA-LOCAL PRODUCE

“Jet-fresh” used to be a positive description... not anymore. The closer the ingredient source is to a restaurant, the more premium the offering becomes. Top restaurants such as Azurmendi and Narisawa focus on the trace-

ability of their ingredients and routinely feature indigenous, seasonal produce. The logic is simple: good food comes from great ingredients, and knowing where it comes from guarantees quality. In fact, this is not a trend, but a mandate in many a progressive kitchen. Something we could also apply to our homes. See also: Zero Carbon footprint.

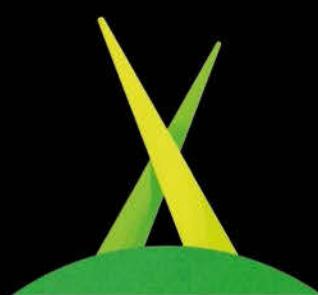


VEGETABLES

Every chef can cook a perfect steak, but many stumble on something simpler: vegetables. It's not just about proteins; the new determinant on whether a chef or restaurant is good, is whether or not they can make vegetables shine. And we're not talking about kale chips.

WILD WAYS

Who still wants to eat foam? While scientific techniques are part of every chef's skillset, it's not necessarily the way food is advancing. The pendulum has firmly swung the other way—there's a yearning for down-to-earth flavours and simpler techniques. Watch Netflix's *Chef's Table* documentary and see how Francis Mallmann's Gaucho grilling and Ben Shewry's caveman methods strike a chord. From cooking with an open fire out in the wild to baking potatoes underground in a natural oven, old-school ways are the new cool.



XOCOONOSTLE

Native to central Mexico, Xoconostle is a kind of prickly pear cactus used in salsas and loved for its acidic flavor. This ingredi-

ent yet again proves how the profile is moving towards sour, citrus flavors and also shows how chefs and diners are continuously rediscovering what's right in their backyard.



YANNICK ALLÉNO

Being able to make a good sauce is the foundation of French cooking. Lauded chef Yannick Alléno has unveiled a new technique called extractions, one that he worked on for over two years. A report at Fine Dining Lovers detailed that Alléno's innovative method includes a reduction process called 'cyroconcentration', in which “the extracted liquid is added to a sorbet style ice before it's spun very quickly in a centrifuge. The liquid is drained and the ice that remains in the centrifuge plays a similar role to that of steam in traditional heat reduction—a sort of cold evaporation.” This meticulous technique results in stronger, concentrated flavored sauces that is the base of any amazing dish.



ZERO CARBON FOOTPRINT

A lot of us worry about our carbon footprint when we travel, but as food documentaries and books have taught us, industrial food processes are the biggest contributors. Be part of the solution: eat a little less beef, eat a little more local, and perhaps start planting. A small thing goes a long way.



THE CULINARY DIPLOMAT

Chef José Andrés is one of the most important thinkers about food today. In an exclusive interview with Esquire, he discusses everything from foie gras to sustainability.

BY JOSEPH HAMMOND
ILLUSTRATION BY ALYSSE ASILO

While many celebrity chefs are content to open Michelin-starred restaurants, write a few cookbooks and appear in the odd travel-focused reality TV show, José Andrés is of a different variety. Beyond his restaurant empire, which stretches from Los Angeles to Puerto Rico, the Catalan chef is also one of the most important innovators in the world of food. He is a tireless advocate for solar cooking and more sustainable food practices. This year he launched Beefsteak, a vegetarian fast casual chain of restaurants with global aspirations.

Andrés burst onto the global restaurant scene after leaving his native Spain in 1990. Though hailed as Spain's unofficial culinary ambassador for helping to globalize tapas style menus, the cuisine at the restaurants managed by his ThinkFoodGroup run the gauntlet from Middle Eastern to Asian but, are always avant-garde. In 2011 he was named Outstanding Chef of the Year at the 2011 James Beard Foundation Award and the following year, was named one of the world's 100 most influential people by Time Magazine.

ESQ: California recently repealed its ban on foie gras, you've long been a defender of foie gras consumption, why is that?

JA: I think as we move forward, humanity over several centuries has improved the situation for animals and I'm very happy that there are people trying to take care of the welfare of animals and I think we should take care of animals. Not just animals alone but, we need to improve the entire chain of production of food. It is good for us and good for the environment.

ESQ: So you don't think humanity should stop eating meat?

JA: Thousands of years of evolution, I don't understand why animals were put here on planet earth. Were they here only to keep [humanity] company? My point is I hope they were put here to feed humanity but, should we be taking good care of these animals and take care of them in a less cruel way? Yes, of course. I would like to end child hunger and should we be fighting those wars and ending children [caught] in war zones. We need to concentrate first once civilization is at that point. Let me put it this way if there is no child hungry tomorrow I will give up meat for the rest of my life but, that's a war we should fight first.

ESQ: France recently became the first country to ban food waste from supermarkets; do you think that is a step in the right direction?

JA: We need to be slightly careful about the government getting too involved in imposing a policy. Sometimes we can end up in a worse situation. This law could lead to a situation where a supermarket

will buy, lets say, lettuce ready and packaged for sale so they can sell them quicker and you won't see the waste being generated there but, it's generated at the farm or at the distribution center. As a result food will be more expensive and you will get less for more. We need to be careful and pragmatic on that issue.

ESQ: How do you think the government should tackle this issue?

JA: I don't mind certain government interventions. In 1996 U.S. Secretary of Agriculture was in my restaurant the day he signed the Good Samaritan bill that protects businesses from donating food to NGOs and soup kitchens so we will not get sued. I thought that was a good bill so any bill which is more like a guideline and it is

not mandatory. I don't think any company wants to have waste, it takes away from profits. I'm a businessman I don't want waste. But, we can have situations where we produce so many clementines that the price goes down so cheap the price of those clementine oranges on the market it isn't worth it for the farmer to pick them if the cost of doing so is 30 percent more than the market price. I'm more worried about that you have entire crops hundreds of tons going to waste because no one picks them that's what we need to fix. Somehow we have to get those clementine oranges, onions, or potatoes and deliver them in places in planet earth where they are needed.

ESQ: You originally started Beefsteak, a fast, casual, vegetarian chain that takes aim at Chipotle what are your goals for this?

JA: I have one now. I will have 10,000 one day but, first I need to have two but, I have big dreams for it I want the best scenario for growing this and I want it to be quick.

ESQ: When you're not opening new restaurants or promoting new food policies, What are you reading these days?

JA: I was reading yesterday *Yojimbo*, the manga. I have a deep love for Japanese culture and this story about a Japanese samurai is really rich. I have read many manga. I am also reading former U.S. General Stanley A. McChrystal book which came out this year, *Team of Teams*. This is an amazing book on leadership and how experience, whether on the battlefield or in other ways, contributes to leadership and how to get the most effectiveness with small teams. ■

ESQUIRE



THE
GROWN-UP'S
GUIDE TO
DRINKING

Tequila

You may remember tequila as the stuff that fueled your lackadaisical college nights, but there's more to this agave-fueled liquor whose rich history spans almost 400 years.

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JEROME GOMEZ
AND **KARA ORTIGA**







Asia has generally not acquired the taste for tequila so it's not easy to find a good tequila (let alone a good mezcal), but you can get a decent tequila fix in Manila and Singapore. Still, any trip to the US or Mexico is a chance to stock up.





You'll still do a tequila body shot, but the chick you do it with won't be as skanky as before. And she may be a bit older. And it's all good.

Agave

BY
RICKY
CARANDANG

The 5 tequilas
I've been
drinking lately *



FRIEND OF MINE who is a whisky drinker once told me that you can tell a lot about a man by what he drinks. Whisky, like my friend, is an acquired taste. The first time you ever sip it you are assaulted by a strong, bitter heat that you may not like. It takes some sophistication to appreciate it. The peatiness, smokiness, sweetness, even leather tones of the nose and taste are elements that whisky drinkers can rhapsodize about. It also takes some amount of disposable income. A bottle of 18 year-old Yamazaki can cost upwards of P15,000 if you can find it. For those manly sophisticated gentlemen with money to burn, drinking whisky can become an almost cult-like experience.

Good for them, I say, but leave me to my tequila. I know. Most people associate tequila with drunken nights in college doing something you regretted in the morning and having a massive hangover to boot. And that gasoline-like burn down your esophagus as you chug the vile liquid, trying to get as little of it on your palate as possible. As a matter of fact, the reason Mexicans invented that entire ritual of licking salt before and sucking a lemon after a shot was to make up for the crappy taste. And then came the body shot. Rub some salt or lime or lemon on your favorite part of someone's anatomy and lick it off them before you take your shot.

And it worked wonders. The ritual became more important than the tequila itself. Tequila became known as the party drink and millions took to it hoping to have a good time and maybe even get laid. Thanks to an aggressive international multi-year marketing effort, tequila, vile as it tasted, had found its place in the pantheon of globally available alcoholic beverages. Idiots like me would continue to lick, shoot, and suck long past our college years. The hangover would just be

FORTALEZA ANEJO

Artisinal tequila made in stone ovens and aged 2 years in oak barrels. The aging actually enhances the taste of the agave unlike some anejos that start to resemble cognac after prolonged aging.

CORRALEJO RESPOSADO

You can buy this stuff at the duty free in Cancun for about \$20.00 a bottle, so you'd expect it to taste like crap but this stuff is triple distilled and for the price points, its value for money. Don't be a snob.

GRAN PATRON EXTRA ANEJO

Patron is a widely available good quality tequila and Gran Patron Extra Anejo is their higher end offering. Aged over three years in oak barrels, it goes down smooth as silk. When I resigned from the cabinet, I celebrated my return to the private sector by sharing a bottle of this with my staff and friends.

XICARU SILVER MEZCAL

Mezcal isn't tequila, but its made in Mexico from espadin agave (as opposed to tequila which is made from blue agave) using more traditional methods. It has a smooth, light, smoky taste and complexity that I can't describe in one sentence. They say tequila is like a gateway drug to mezcal, and Xicaru is a great way to introduce yourself to mezcal.

CASA NOBLE ANEJO

Owned by legendary guitarist Carlos Santana. Smooth, oaky, with a heavier mouthfeel, and it won't betray you the next morning.

the cost of entry for having a badass party drink.

Then things changed.

As we entered a new millennium someone brought a bottle of Herradura Añejo to a party I attended. At some point we ran out of lime and we started drinking the Herradura straight, chased by beer. To my pleasant surprise, it didn't need a chaser. It went down well. The heat was still there but it didn't burn. And you could actually taste a woody, caramel element to the stuff.

Turns out tequila makers down in Mexico started to upscale their product. They got rid of the worm. They insisted on using only 100 percent blue agave to make their brew. They would triple distill it. Some of them started aging the stuff in oak barrels for more than three years. Tequila could taste damn good and you would no longer be punished with the Cuervo hangover. Even Cuervo, responsible for about half of our college-age hangovers, got into the act, selling their premium Reserva de la Familia, supposedly made only for their family's private consumption (that's probably bullshit but the stuff is expensive and tastes pretty good).

Today, in A'Toda Madre they sell a bottle of Partida Extra Anjeo for about P100,000. You can actually hear someone say why they prefer a reposado to an anejo without thinking that they're a stuck up poser. Usually because they gained that knowledge through some experience in a dive bar with a bunch of Mexicans. Tequila, the original badass party drink has grown up (a little) and has become (a little) finer. What's the difference? You'll still do a tequila body shot, but the chick you do it with won't be as skanky as before. And she may be a bit older. And it's all good.

One thing though: no matter how fine your tequila is, drink it from a shot glass—never a brandy snifter like they like to serve it these days. Because there are some things about tequila that shouldn't ever change. ■



SHOTS AND BEYOND

Sipping tequila is already a pleasure on its own, but who says you can't have more fun with it and bring in more flavor? We asked three establishments to create off-the-menu tequila-based cocktails exclusively for Esquire. Here is what they come up with.

Gold Tiger

*Out to get smashed?
Try this tequila and Red
Horse beer combo. It's
surprisingly good.*

2 oz Gold Tequila

1 oz calamansi juice

2 oz simple syrup

Crying Tiger
Guanzon Street, Makati City





Madeleine

A refreshing citrusy drink that is light and sweet, with just the right kick.

1½ oz Tequila Blanco

1 oz grapefruit juice

½ oz lemon juice

½ oz sugar syrup

2 inch slice of cucumber

Half a wheel of orange

Top with tonic water

The Curator

134 Legazpi St., corner
C. Palanca St.,
Makati City





Tequila 101

The lowdown on the Mexican liquor that is loved around the world. Aljor Perreras of A'Toda Madre gives us a crash course on the Mexican spirit.

ESQUIRE: When was your first sip of tequila?

ALJOR PERRERAS: Gosh, I don't remember. I was maybe 16. It was the usual cheap tequila, Jose Cuervo Especial, which by the way is the number one selling tequila by volume in the world. But I remember my worst ever experience was on Jose Cuervo Especial, when I was 20 years old, and we were shooting them, and someone passed me a cigar which I smoked like a cigarette. I was out for three days puking green stuff.

ESQ: Can you tell us something about A'Toda Madre?

AP: When I moved back here in 2002 from California where I grew up, I was surprised at how little Mexican food was available here. It was a staple in California. So I always wanted to have a Mexican establishment. I also wanted to educate people about Tequila. So here we have something called The Flight, which is a sampling of the different categories of tequila. We also have tequila tastings where we pair them with Mexican food.

ESQ: Can you identify a tequila drinker when you see one?

AP: We basically have three types of customers here. One are the guys like us who have been around the world and know what they want; the next are the curious ones who don't have any negative feelings about tequila—they just want to try it out and learn; and the third are the toughest ones because they come here and they say, "No, no, no!"

History of Tequila

In 1521, the Aztecs have been fermenting the agave plant's nectar into a drink called pulque. Just a few decades after the Spanish landed on Mexican shores came the grandparent of tequila, the mezcal wine. The name tequila came later on, after a small Mexican town in modern-day Jalisco.

It wasn't until 1600 when Don Pedro Sánchez de Tagle, the Marquis of Altagira, and now known today as the "Father of Tequila", built the first commercial tequila factory in Jalisco territory, which ushered in the first mass production of tequila.

I'm done with that! I don't want to pass out or throw up!" And that's a lot of people. And I say, "Chill out, have a seat."

ESQ: Where is tequila made?

AP: Tequila is a product of Mexico. It can only be called tequila if it's from Mexico. It has an appellation of origin, which is like how champagne can only come from the Champagne region, or scotch can only come from Scotland. So if you see tequila that's not made in Mexico, it's not tequila.

ESQ: Why are some tequilas more expensive than others?

AP: There are two types of tequila, one they call the mixto, which is mixed, and then there's 100% agave. Mixto got started because at some point, there was a big demand in tequila so they wanted to increase productivity. So they took the 100% agave and mixed it with other juices and alcohol. The Cuervo Especial is a mixto. It's not so bad; it serves its purpose.

If the bottle doesn't say 100% agave, it's a mixto. Here in our bar, we only serve 100% agave. These are the sipping tequilas. They're so sophisticated and flavorful, that you really want to sip it to savor the taste.

ESQ: How wide is the range of tastes of tequila?

AP: Very. There are many factors that affect the taste of tequila. One is where the agave is grown—lowlands or the highlands. If it's from the mountains, it's generally sweeter than the ones in the lowlands. And then there's how it is processed: what yeast did they use, or how long. Another factor is the wood of the cask they used to distill it in. Lately, there are people who are mixing the categories.

ESQ: Why are there so many different colors of tequila?

AP: There are basically four distinct categories or expressions of tequila: Blanco, Reposado, Añejo, and then there's the Extra-Añejo.

Blanco is the tequila that is not aged and bottled within two months right after distillation. Blanco is very green, citrusy, and it has some grassy notes.

The Reposado, or rested tequila is when they put it in a big wooden cask, this is the first time the tequila touches wood, and it gets aged between two months to one day less than a year. This is where the tequila gets the characteristics of the wood: oakiness, butter, and honey notes. Then they take that Reposado and put it in smaller casks so there's more surface to liquid ratio, and they age it from one year, up to one day less than three years, and that's the Añejo. You can now distinguish the taste of apples, cloves, chocolates, and dried fruits.

And then the very last one, they take the Añejo, and they keep it in a wooden cask for more than three years. There are a few exclusive ones that go up to five years. They call this the Extra-Añejo. It tastes very rich, very much like cognac.

The alcohol content is the same, but the taste gets more complex.

ESQ: So how are you supposed to drink tequila?

AP: People ask me that all the time. My answer is, however you want. There are sophisticated ways of drinking it, but it is such a fun drink that you don't want to limit the experience. However, having said that, I would also recommend that if you're drinking something expensive, you should savor it. I'm a purist but I would never impose my view on anyone else. If you want to spray it over your leche flan, go ahead. I drink it neat, although I do like it when it's chilled. When it's chilled, it takes the edginess out of it.

Respect tequila. If you take care of it, it will take care of you.

In 1758, Don Jose Antonio de Cuervo received a land grant from the King of Spain to grow agave in Jalisco. A year later, the king awarded Jose Cuervo the rights on the production of tequila, staking roots for the world's most loved tequila 200 years later.

Tequila first arrived in the United States through three barrels in 1873, exported by Don Cenobio Sauza. With the creation of the margarita in 1938, the country would become its number one market after more than a century.

In 2006, the new aging category, Extra-Añejo, was introduced, which is tequila aged for three years onwards in oak barrels.

—SAMANTHA BELTRAN



The Border

Here is a creative spin to the classic Old Fashioned.

1½ oz Reposado Tequila

½ oz Amaro Nonino

½ oz pineapple syrup

2 dashes of spiced chocolate bitters

2 dashes of orange bitters

Garnish with a cherry

12/10

7635 Guijo Street, Makati City





COLEEN GARCIA IS ALWAYS HUNGRY

HER HOLIDAY PHOTOS IN A BIKINI GAVE HER A NEW IMAGE AND IGNITED NEW EXCITEMENT IN HER CAREER. BUT EVEN WITH A HIT SOAP AND A NEW MOVIE ON THE HORIZON, THE ACTRESS, JONTY CRUZ FINDS OUT, IS READY TO DEVOUR SO MUCH MORE.

Photographed by Edric Chen



IN A FAR-OFF PARADISE LAST DECEMBER, COLEEN GARCIA UPLOADED PHOTOS ON INSTAGRAM AND ALMOST BROKE THE INTERNET.

Back home, Coleen's Instagram account suddenly caught on fire. Her beach photos in the Maldives were liked and shared more than a thousand times over. Pictures of her resting along the shore, with her arched back and outstretched legs, soaking up the sun filled everyone's screen, and everyone asked the question: wait, who is this girl with the sweet face and serious abs?

"No, not at all. My boyfriend and I, we were just on vacation," said Coleen when I asked her if it was planned. "And a lot of people actually thought we went there to have a shoot. We just really wanted to go to the Maldives because we read so much about it online. We started to play around with the cameras, started to take pictures of the scenery, and of each other also." It was a holiday getaway that turned into entertainment headline fodder. Stories of her vacation not only spread online, it even made it to primetime news. "By the end of the our trip, we didn't realize that it was going to be like that at all. It's not something that we actually tried to do but yeah, it's good that something good came out of it also."

Over the last few years, America has had its fair share of celebrities that first made it big

online. Justin Bieber is arguably its biggest success and there is no corner of the Internet that Kim Kardashian hasn't conquered. Foreign celebrities owe so much to the online world for (arguably) starting their careers. Not so much here. Even if the Philippines boast so many online users, locals who have made actual strides in it are few and far between—celebrities included. A career in showbiz—for the most part—is dictated by the people behind the curtain, and the future they have contrived for you is next to certain. That's why Coleen's sudden rise thanks to Instagram has been talked about over and over. It's rare for any actress to suddenly be able to change the course of her career into new and unexpected places whether she planned to or not. Before her vacation that last week of 2014, Coleen was seen as the teenybopper darling in her noontime variety program, *Showtime*. Back then she was everyone's baby sister. That all changed come 2015.

IT'S AROUND FIVE in the afternoon on a drenched, gray-soaked Thursday when I start to hear several dogs barking. I'm alone inside a living room that appears to belong to either a pop-culture geek or a rock star from New York. Across from me, in the corner of the room, there's a statue of the hammer-wielding superhero, Thor, and right above it is a giant bust of an angry, growling Wolverine. They are my only company as I wait for Coleen to arrive. She's coming from Aguirre Street in Parañaque where she's opening her

first bar/restaurant/beer-pong haven called Plan B. I get a text that she's running a little late but she's near. I don't mind the wait but Wolverine looks like he does.

The place has that industrial, brick and wood design seen in most of the nicer condos in Manila. It tries to bring me to New York's downtown area even if I'm actually in a village within a village within a village near the House of Representatives. I'm staring at a mural hanging behind me when I hear the sound of the front door opening followed by Coleen apologizing and blaming traffic. She looks different from the last time I saw her. Calmer. Obviously more relaxed now, wearing her cap and sneakers, than she did wearing next to nothing while eating a whole roasted chicken. In place of handlers, photographers, and stylists, there are only the two of us now, her dogs running around. She's welcomed me into her home, into her life.

Coleen begins to talk about her career and the many ups and downs she's gone through both in front of and behind the camera. She says that she's had to face a lot of intrigue these last few years and faced one difficult decision after the next. It seems that they have affected her, even just a little bit. She says that she doesn't really keep a lot of showbiz friends. "I think it's the best way to stay grounded," she says. "The life you started, the life you had before going into showbiz... Keep that life. Because you know, it's good not to be absorbed in everything that's happening in the industry." Coleen's cautious and you can't blame her. In an industry where jealousy is second nature, a lot of backstabbing and childish bickering is expected.

WHILE UNPLANNED, Coleen does admit that her Instagram posts were a break for her career, but it wasn't the only one. She counts her role in *Showtime* as one of them even if she was hesitant to go for it in the first place. "The offer for *Showtime*... it's something I also had to think [about]," she says. Coleen at first shares that the choice was made during a low point in her life but quickly recants it. "I had just moved out, I started living on my own, I started supporting myself... It was

"EVEN THOUGH I WAS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH IT, I DECIDED TO GO WITH IT BECAUSE I KNEW THAT IT WAS FOR ME."

something I really had to think about before saying yes."

The same dilemma happened with another of her recent breaks when she played her most unexpected role yet in the indie film *#Y*. In it she chose to play the role of the promiscuous schoolgirl instead of the safer typical lead female role. "*#Y* was something that at first I wasn't comfortable with," she says. "And you know I kept asking if it was something I should really be doing, and I wasn't confident. Even though the fact was I was uncomfortable with it, I decided to go with it because I knew that it was for me."

The film was directed by Gino M. Santos, who's made the rounds of our local film festivals starting with the new cult-favorite *The Animals*, which premiered back in Cinemalaya in 2012 and later played in both the Stockholm International Film Festival and the New York Asian Film Festival. Gino has known Coleen since they were children, having met her when she was just nine years old, way before Coleen even began thinking of a life in front of the camera. In a phone interview, Gino says that when he first got into the industry, he immediately wanted to work with Coleen and they finally got to do so in *#Y*, a sexual coming-of-age story set in the age of social media. It was Coleen's biggest role yet—one that revealed a different side of her—but Gino originally wanted something much different for Coleen. "I wanted her to play the innocent girl next door role/love interest. But I was surprised that she wanted to play the feisty, liberated best friend of the lead which was a more daring role." He says that when he discussed the movie with Coleen, the actress told him, "If I'm going to do an indie film, I want to do a role that's more challenging, I don't want to play it safe." That was the moment Gino saw her as more than just an "artista." "She was an artist. She knew what she wanted,"

he adds. "She was hungry to explore new roles and shed [the] teenybopper image that young stars are usually boxed into." The pair is about to release their sophomore film, *Ex with Benefits*. It still shares some elements with *#Y*, albeit set on a much grander stage, and with a bigger budget, and now Coleen is paired with the current king of alpha-males: Derek Ramsey. They're hoping the film will be released this month.

In all her years being a host in Showtime, Coleen, now 22, says she's learned so much from her cast mates. And it's a who's who of industry icons, among them Anne Curtis and Coleen's boyfriend Billy Crawford, arguably a great group of people to learn from. But the one person she says she's learned the most from is the show's trivia master, Kim Atienza. "It's really *Kuya* Kim. Not just because he's the oldest but also because he has the most experience in a lot of other areas, like politics," she says. "Every time I have questions, he's the first one I ask." This affection and admiration is mutual when Kim talks about Coleen in a phone interview. "Throughout the years I've seen Coleen grow by how well she's handled adversities both on and off the screen," he says. Kim acknowledges that there is a father-daughter aspect to their relationship. He's not just the show's oldest cast member, he's also older than Coleen's parents. "What I really see in Coleen is that she has so much potential and I don't know if she or a lot of people see that."

"I feel like I'm incomplete," Coleen tells me. "And I think everyone should feel that way until they settle down." She starts to squeeze the pillow she's been holding for the last hour a little tighter, a little closer. She gathers herself as if to really own what she's saying. "You should always want more for your life, you should always want to grow; you should always want to be better... Everyone should always be hungry."



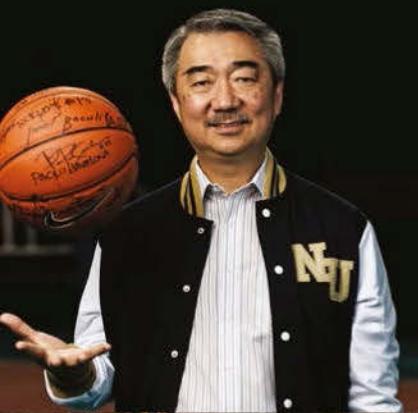
Esquire

WOMAN WE LOVE





INSPIRING



20



ENGAGING



IGNITING



20 YEARS OF
FUELING YOUR
PASSION



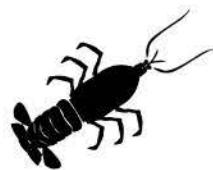
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ESQUIRE GOES ON A
FOOD TRIP



Filipino food—and drink, for that matter—is having a moment. Steeped in tradition yet endlessly open to possibilities, our country's cuisine is uniquely flavorful, offering pleasures both obvious and subtle, and more and more people than ever are coming around to discovering its delights. The ESQUIRE team traveled to three different locales in the Philippines to savor the best of food—and company.

ISABELA



LOOKING FOR
LOBSTERS
IN ALL THE
RIGHT PLACES

Isabela should be your next dining destination. But don't expect trendy restaurants—the best food here is still found in the market, in the *gotohan*, or straight from the sea. Audrey N. Carpio tags along as Negrense chef JP Anglo heads north and cooks like a local.

— X —
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
AUDREY N. CARPIO AND ALAN JACALAN





Master kusinero:
JP Anglo, chef and
owner of Sarsá and
Kafé Batwan, learns
the secrets of Aling
Luring's kitchen.

JP

ANGLO, NATIVE SON OF

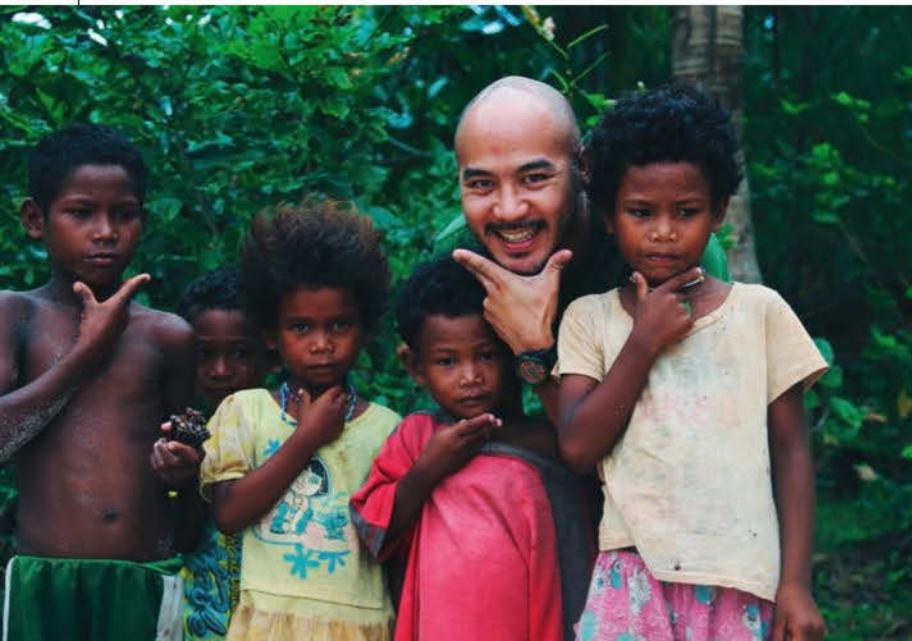
Bacolod, was no stranger to innards. Chicken *isaw*, *isol*, *baticolon*, and *atay* are all prominently featured in his restaurants. But that's just chicken. We were in Isabela for the first time, willingly

subjecting ourselves to the region's greatest food hits. And at our very first meal, we knew we were in for some serious eating, faced with a trio of goat dishes in ascending order of exoticness: *kaldereta*, *kilawin*, and *papaitan*. *Kaldereta* was easy, this tomatoey dish is found in every home, office cafeteria and country club, maybe not always with goat viand, which adds to its depth. The *kilawin*, which is the northern *kinilaw*/ceviche version for meats, was less familiar, with rarer cuts of the goat thrown in to give it the texture of *sisig*. Finally, the *papaitan*, a goat innard blood stew which JP immediately raved about. It was officially good. There must be something about drinking animal blood that makes one feel alive.

Personally, I had no stomach for innards, although the soup of the *papaitan* was tantalizing. The *pait* flavor comes from goat bile squeezed from its bladder. The chewy tubes, the texture of the intestinal villi, the deep organy taste of the liver/pancreas/kidney were just factors I could not mentally overcome. *Papaitan* is said to be a truly Filipino recipe, since it predated the Spanish occupation in the Ilocos region. Nose-to-tail dining may be recently trendy in fancy farmhouse restaurants, but this has been the way Filipinos have been eating for centuries. So when JP puts "Nose-to-Tail Sticks" of oxtail, tripe and lengua on his Kafé Batwan menu, it feels modern yet completely natural.



BACK AT BATWAN, JP Anglo's home base in Rockwell, he is feeding some friends an Anglofied version of a dish we had traveled far north to sample just a few days earlier, the *pancit cabagan*. The *miki* noodles—chewier and gooier than regular *canton* noodles—were from Isabela, as was the garlicky *longganisa*, but into the sauce he added the clam dip featured in Batwan's Trio of Pinoy Spreads. *Pancit*, after all, is any regionalized take on a variety of Chinese noodle, toss in your protein of choice, some veggies, soy sauce and *patis*, garnish with *calamansi*, serve at birthday parties. We are reviewing the freshly made memories from our trip to Isabela, and also dishing on what seems



to be the most valued currency of gossip these days: chefs, being one himself. I wonder what came first, the reverence for food or the adulation of those who make it?

Take, for example, the authors of the latest scribblings on Kafé Batwan's walls: John-Lloyd Cruz, Mark Nicdao. The Uys. Normally, wall space was reserved for glowing reviews from credible food writers, and that there were already plenty of. But whose thumbs-up would theoretically bring more first time customers in? Clinton Palanca's in the Inquirer (*The batchoy, which I recommend heartily*) or Liz Uy's on Instagram (*Sobrang sarap! I will keep coming back!* 😊😊😊)?

Manila's food scene in the past five years has truly begun to show itself an eager, somewhat embarrassed debutante who had been waiting in the wings, overshadowed by her older, prettier and more venerated sister cuisines of Thailand and Vietnam. The fact that Madrid Fusion happened right here this past year means that right now, Filipino food is totally happening. In both coasts of the United States, this revolution is being mirrored with new places resembling nothing like your *tita's turo-turo*, restaurants that have taken up the challenge of transforming homestyle comfort cooking with often ignominious ingredients into something non-Pinoys would eat.

With chefs such a driving force in popular culture, they are easily treated like rock gods, even if we're never sampled, or ever hope to sample, their work (R.I.P. El Bulli). The creation of food, like music, draws worshippers, as both nourish the soul—yet food satisfies an even more basic, primal need. Food is also a very visual medium, and before we even stick a fork in it we have already consumed it with our eyes. Hence the most popular, yet also derided, genre of Instagram posts is food porn. Suddenly, anyone who can take a top shot of their orders at Yardbird (geotagged, of course) and add a VSCO filter is a globe-trotting foodie. The phenomenon has nevertheless elevated the craft of food styling and universalized the idea of cooking as not just a necessity, but an art.

On our own shores, JP Anglo has emerged at this intersection of tendencies—the global modern, with its focus on technique, presentation, and precious ingredients, and the humble local, characterized by available ingredients, cost-effectiveness, and heritage—an unabashedly Filipino chef making Filipino food. With Sarsá, he introduced us to the saucy Negrense palate; with Kafé Batwan, he refined it, twisted it and made allusions to fusion (*inasal* burrito, *batchoy* ramen) but it was never fusion. You're not going to find foie gras on the menu, or foam. The chef may reorganize the structure of the dish, borrowing techniques from other cuisines, but the flavors and the impact are

always Filipino. And JP has been getting his fair share of press, because Manila always loves the next hot thing. Yet, one feels that his food sincerely strikes a chord. It evokes childhood memories, grandparents, one's summers in the province, the scent of *kalachuchi*. You can't escape your Filipino roots—*pancit*, *lomi*, or *mami* will always mean so much more to you than ramen. Who would have thought Manila's It-society would be publicly craving for a bowl of the lowly *batchoy*? When it's made with Kurobota pork and tuna skin and a 12-hour bone broth. When it has JP Anglo's name on it.



WE WERE AT THE HOUSE OF KIKO DY, son of Isabela governor Bojie Dy, and quite possibly the best-looking *barangay* captain we've met. At 28, he's spearheading the San Fabian organic farming initiative that trains local farmers to start converting a portion of their traditional corn crops into organic produce that can be grown cheaply and harvested quickly, like lettuce. Isabela is the largest province in Luzon



THE ESQUIRE

FOOD
TRIP



The view from
the chop.
Opposite:
The children of
honeymoon island.

and the country's largest corn producer, but corn can only be harvested twice a year and uses a lot of expensive and environmentally destructive pesticides. Suffice it to say the lunch he had prepared for us—the flight of goat meat plus a nouvelle interpretation of risotto using black heirloom rice and *lechon kawali*—was all organic.

After lunch we took a long drive down the National Highway to the town of Cabatuan, where *Manang Irene Ramos* would show us and at least 50 other people how she makes her *kutsinta*, judged the best in Isabel, if not the Philippines. Now *kutsinta* is part of the *kakanin* group of Philippine sweets, made with a combination of glutinous rice, rice flour (e.g., *bibingka*, *puto*) and/or a starchy root vegetable (e.g., cassava cake) and flavored with coconut. These are the ultimate Filipino fiesta treats, are usually very sticky and as low-brow down-home as a dessert can get. The *kutsinta* is a chewy orange disc topped with grated coconut, and *Manang Irene*'s terrible secret is that she discovered that using third class all-purpose flour, instead of rice flour, gives it a smoother texture. I must say she also makes a mean *puto*, but I haven't discovered what modifications were involved. At some point during the enjoyment of the *kakanin*, people realized that JP was somewhat of a celebrity. Apparently, everyone in the province watches KrisTV, a program JP regularly guests on. Selfies were taken, and JP was asked to pose holding up the entire platter of *kutsinta* next to

You can't escape your Filipino roots—pancit, lomi or mami will always mean so much more to you than ramen. Who would have thought Manila's It-society would be publicly craving for a bowl of the lowly batchoy?

Manang Irene, as if he made them. He was happy to do so, of course—they were really quite good. "Like butter," he said.

Our next stop was The Mushroom Center in Cauayan, a livelihood project established several years ago by the governor under the One Town, One Product plan. Cauayan wasn't particularly known for anything back then, so they said, why not mushrooms? The center is essentially a dark warehouse conducive to growing beautiful oyster mushrooms from bags of sawdust. The organization designs mushroom products, usually as substitutes in fried meaty goods like *lumpia* and *empanada*, which are then sold to the public and at trade fairs and such. Here we also met the locally famous *Aling Belen Holgado*, the *longganisa* queen, who demoed to the crowd how her sausages get stuffed. *Aling Belen* had been making *longganisa* since the '70s, perfecting her mixture with love and soy sauce until the Dys discovered her, became huge patrons, and the rest is history. Not that she became ridiculously wealthy or anything—she still mans her own stall at the Cauayan market—but she was able to put her six children through college, and that she is proud of.

In the afternoon, we were deposited at the Universal Leaf tobacco plantation guesthouse in the town of Reina Mercedes, and there I rested my gullet and let my stomach bile do its work while JP did laps in the swimming pool. Dinner would be in a few hours, and people

were setting up a little stage and DJ booth area, along with several dining tables by the swimming pool. I was starting to understand that eating here was truly a communal thing, even a celebratory thing, especially when you're with the Gov. Yes, we were on a press trip officially hosted by the government of Isabel, and we were accompanied by the undersecretary of agriculture, a celebrity chef, and Jonty Cruz. I was the one least accustomed to the public life, whether



political or showbiz. Case in point—on the last morning I would walk into a “photo op” still dressed in my ratty *pantulog*. I had failed to heed the lesson of one of Usec Berna Puyat’s stories earlier, that growing up in a Romulo household meant that she could never come down from her room not dressed and made up.

That evening we were introduced to the Albanos, another influential political clan from Isabela. Tonypet holds the position of vice governor while his older brother Rod is a congressman. Part of the food history of Isabela is written in their genes—the Albanos are descendants of a Chinese trader who married a Filipina and established a *panciteria* in Cabagan, where the eponymous noodle dish was born. We begin dinner with a *pica-pica* of *lechon carnero*, a lamb roast marinated in a red wine sauce, another specialty which Kiko ordered from a *lechonero* in San Felipe. There was a plethora of well-executed classic dishes, like *kare-kare* (the vegetables were separated from the stew so as to not get soggy), steamed river fish, and an eggplant salad steeped in coconut vinegar. The highlight of the meal were these juicy giant crabs from the coastal regions of Isabela, which we would be visiting the following day, weather permitting. After finishing a bottle of wine with my new pals (but it was myself, mostly), I went to bed and tried my best not to do the calorie computation. When you’re abroad, it’s pointless to keep mentally converting dollar prices to pesos when you’re dining out—just go with it, they say. Maybe it’s the same way with food itself. The calories in Isabela are worth that much more because I made the trip here, because the people have been so gracious with their bounty, and because who knows when I will eat this way again?



THE SUCCESS OF SARSÁ and the confidence of JP Anglo as a chef didn’t come out of nowhere, as it may appear to many. JP, now 36 years old, had been a restaurateur in his hometown of Bacolod for nearly 10 years, and things weren’t always so smooth sailing.

In 2004, after studying at Le Cordon Bleu in Sydney, he obtained an Australian permanent residency then stayed on to work at various Asian restaurants. “Always as a commis, or even a dishwasher—those were the kinds of jobs I applied for. I preferred to just watch and learn,” JP says. He kept to himself a lot, to the point that there would be days at his job where he never spoke to anyone aside from the perfunctory yes or no. Head down, he quietly and diligently did his work, perhaps like many other immigrant workers toiling in a foreign kitchen.

For five years he would fly back and forth between Sydney and Bacolod to work, and then later to maintain his Australian residency, and in that time he opened Mai Pao, a dimsum tea house, and Mu Shu, a modern Asian restaurant, both in Bacolod. During one of his three-month long sojourns to Australia, he met a girl through his friend Cat Juan, and he ended up staying there for almost a year. As a result, his restaurant in Bacolod was on the verge of shutting down. People had stopped coming for lunch. “Mu Shu had completely turned into a bar, a party place,” JP acknowledges, “because the chef wasn’t in the kitchen anymore.”

This was a turning point for JP. He was faced with a choice: to keep his residency, which was just one full year away from citizenship, or



Claws out:
Dumagat
fishermen in
Maconacon
harvest lobsters
in floating cages
out at sea and
make around
P500 per kilo.



to return to the Philippines and give up the dream—or whatever it was—of living abroad for good. “I chose to save my restaurant,” he says. That his relationship with the girl ended was also a determining factor, and so JP decided to give up his residency for good and really dedicate himself to being a chef. After years of sweating it out in other people’s kitchens as a line cook, taking the heat from mean head chefs, and undergoing grueling training and intense soul searching, he came home to claim a future that was rightfully his.

Mu Shu was renovated completely and reopened on July 7, 2007 as a restaurant and lounge. On its new menu, described early on by regional bloggers as “Filipino food reinvented,” one could glean the origins of certain Sarsá dishes.



ON OUR SECOND DAY IN ISABELA we had a massive breakfast spread at the very popular Aling Luring’s, a Cauayan eatery styled with *nipa* thatches. Gov ordered everything on the menu for us, granted there were only nine dishes, but he ordered nine dishes each. The *goto* was phenomenal, but what Aling Luring’s is really famous for is the *serkele*, another *dinuguan*-style specialty that actually originated in Bulacan. What’s different is that the beef innards are cooked with vinegar, *adobo*-like, before the blood is poured in. Again, JP and Jonty loved it, while Berna and I demurred. Why *serkele*? we ask the propri-



I was starting to understand that eating here was truly a communal thing, even a celebratory thing, especially when you're with the Governor.

them to also recognize him from TV, but the only thing they recognized was a spirit of playfulness. The Dumagat is a semi-nomadic indigenous tribe related to the Aetas of the north, and they live by the sea near the isolated towns along the coast, and we would be seeing them again in Maconacon.

The Gov and Vice Gov showed us a guesthouse that was under construction. The uninhabited Honeymoon Island is relatively inaccessible (unless you have chopper or fly by single-engine prop to a municipal airport in Palanan, then take a *bangka*), and as of yet there is no major artery connecting the western side of Isabela to the eastern side of the Sierra Madres. During Madrid Fusion, one Pinoy chef requested for specifically sized lobsters to use in his dish for the Mindanao regional lunch. Isabela was the nearest place where lobsters are naturally found, so Gov. Bojie himself had to measure the crustaceans, airlift them over to Cauayan then have his driver travel over 10 hours to Manila to deliver them fresh at the chef's doorstep. How's that for sea-to-spoon dining?

We hopped back on the chopper for the short ride to the town of Maconacon, which has a small municipal airport. The town still showed some of the damage from Typhoon Juan, which made landfall in Isabela in 2010, but, as in every place we've visited so far, we were warmly welcomed with a sortie and a personalized tarpaulin. We were here to check out the lobster catch, a livelihood operation that benefits the Dumagat people, who dive for lobsters then keep them in a floating cage out at sea, fattening them up and harvesting whenever needed.

We needed some lobsters for a photograph, so we sailed on over to one of the cages, which is about 12 feet wide and six feet deep. A Dumagat fisherman, wearing funky vintage swim goggles, would enter one of the little manholes, fully submerge himself, and pop out after a minute with a huge spiny lobster or sometimes a slipper lobster or *curacha*, the cockroach of the sea. They were paid for their catch and we headed over to the municipal hall to enjoy a lunch of endless lobsters. The price of the meal would've been astronomical had we been in some fancy seafood restaurant in a European resort town, but for the folks of Maconacon, they were only a little bit special. Once they figured out who JP was when he started poking around the kitchen, squealing ensued (from the women, that is). The mayor sat down at our table and requested for more cages from the Department of Agriculture, as the fisherfolk had identified more lobster hotspots. This was the lunch trade-off, this was how things get done.



JP BECAME THE POPULAR TV character "Chef Jays" when he joined *Master Chef Pinoy Edition* as a judge, alongside Chef Lau (Rolando Laudico) and Chef Ferns (Fernando Aracama) for 62 episodes in late 2012. Unlike the latter two chefs who had built their reputations in Manila with establishments named after themselves, JP had two

ctor, who laughs. Her mother named it after the "circles" in the dish.

JP got up and wandered around in the kitchen, checking out how they do stuff. Food is cooked the old way over a charcoal stove, which takes longer but results in more flavor. He dipped his fingers in a large *caldero* of *serkele* bubbling on the stove, then proceeded to lick them. "You have to use all five fingers when you taste food," he told me in his *Master Chef* voice. "So you never double dip."

After breakfast, we drove to an open field and waited for our next ride, a carabao. Just kidding. We took a Eurocopter EC130 and crossed the agricultural heartland of the province, gliding over the verdant canopy of the Sierra Madres, the longest mountain range in the Philippines. *Look! Look and appreciate this beautiful rainforest while we still have it!* instructed Vice Gov Tonypet over the headset. I peered down, all the while gripping what was allegedly called the "oh-shit" bar. The weather was perfect, but all those high-profile helicopter crashes in recent memory made me paranoid. We circled around Estagno Island, also known as Honeymoon Island, which is heart-shaped when seen from above. Just around the corner was the Pacific Ocean. As we hovered over the beach, spinning sand all over the place, the whole scene seemed straight out of *Apocalypse Now*, except without the gore and pathos. The chopper landed on a small plank and I ducked out as fast as I could.

On the island, there was a bunch of kinky-haired Dumagat kids whom JP immediately started chumming around with. I half-expected



Clockwise from left: Moriecos, a suman stuffed with coconut cream and brown sugar; Breakfast at Aling Luring's; pancit palabok; JP makes pancit cabagan at Billy Jack's in Tuguegarao.



restaurants in Bacolod. So he was in the rather strange position of being known as a celebrity chef, but whose cooking nobody in Manila has tried (unless they've been to Bacolod) when he opened up his first restaurant Sarsá, at the Fort. JP was up against his own image, and he was determined to prove he was more than that.

He rises to these sorts of challenges. After three previous failed attempts at college, he thought he'd give the Center for Culinary Arts a go. His mother considered it a last ditch effort and presented him an ultimatum—if cooking school didn't work out, it's back to the farm for him. But JP did finally discover what he could look forward to every day: putting on an apron.

In between *Master Chef* tapings, he'd spend his free time surfing, but it was during those out-of-town breaks that he got to do some of his heaviest cooking. He'd shop for ingredients at the market and cook at the beach with his surf buds. "And it would be all Filipino food," he

describes. "That's where I was able to practice. Things didn't just fall into my lap. I worked hard for it, I paid my dues." He also started to look around for potential business partners, opportunities for work. He tried out for one particular restaurant in Rockwell by making his trademark roasted *kalabasa* with *ginamos gata* soup. The restaurant owner didn't like it at all, and said not so nice things about him to her chef friends at chef parties.

"Those things fuel me," JP says. "I called my sister and told her about how the woman hated my soup, but that the kitchen staff loved it. Tracie said, you don't have to conform. Stick to your own style." Also upon his sister Tracie Anglo Dizon's advice, he went to Ateneo business school to learn how to not lose money, and there again he felt like one of the most underperforming students. "I'm a cook," he shrugs.

When Tracie, her husband, and another partner decided to put up



He'd cook at the beach with his surf buds. "And it would be all Filipino food. That's where I was able to practice," JP says. "Things didn't just fall into my lap. I worked hard for it, I paid my dues."

a restaurant with JP, it took nearly two years to conceptualize. They settled on Negrense cuisine with a playful spin, something a bit innovative yet still familiar. With a crack team in place, JP was allowed to do what he does best. "For the first time, all I had to do was cook!" he says. Now, at Sarsá, his *kalabasa* is the number-two bestseller. Revenge, truly, is a dish best served with crispy *dilis*.

Vindication is a recurring theme in JP's life. His sister tells me of his getting-into-trouble days as a Bacolodnon youth—he would somehow always end up in fights, comically mismatched ones where it would be him against an inordinate number of guys. JP chalks it up to the Chinese-Conyo rivalry (JP went to a Chinese school), but his martial arts training helped him kick many a butt on his own. Until one day they brought in around 20 guys and he got his ass served like a plate of chicken *isol*. It was an infamous fight in Bacolod, but JP assures that all is well now. They eat at his restaurants.

Tracie thinks her brother's propensity to land into trouble has a lot to do with his incorruptible innocence. "He's such a boy," she sighs. Growing up with two older sisters who bullied him into playing their girly games made him open and generous, and extremely likeable to women. As a kid he showed a lot of interest in cooking, learning how to make proper fried rice from a Chinese uncle, but cooking was never a career option back then. His restlessness and lack of focus played out throughout his youth, much to the frustration of his family, until cooking finally did become a career option, and more. As for fighting, he's since channeled the aggressive energy of martial arts into the zen calm of surfing. He's a big softie, really.

"But he's a tough boss too, you know," Tracie says. "I think that comes from his training in Australia. They were tough on him, so he's tough on them. He takes his work seriously." JP, who started out as a boss but then willingly put himself through the ranks, has a deep understanding of how he wants to run his kitchen. He hires his cooks from Bacolod, where he keeps an eye out for people with raw talent. They may not be professionally trained, but in his kitchen, he holds them to a certain standard, treating them as if they come from top culinary schools. They appreciate that. It's uplifting, and they're always in nice uniforms.

landscaped inner courtyard. JP got started on dinner in the outdoor kitchen—he had brought back all the leftover lobster heads and uneaten parts from the Maconacon lunch and he was going to make a lobster-*kalabasa* bisque, similar to the one on Kafé Batwan's menu, and a chicken *tinola*-*arroz caldo* mashup for Berna and Gov. Dy, who were both unfortunately allergic to seafood. But first, he dumped a whole bottle of Tanduay into the pot of boiling lobster bits. "Wala lang," he grins.

The dinner buffet was a potluck of sorts, with several *barangay* captain-cooks bringing over their best dishes: *sinampalukan na kambing*, fried goat *kilawin*, a roasted duck, plus three organic *lechons* from the piggery we visited. I'm guessing vegetables are not a big part of the northern diet, do the goats eat all the crops? It was our last meal in Isabela with the entire local government group and its staff, the least we could do in return was to make JP cook for them. I asked him what was it like to work in their kitchen. Tonypet asked if he taught the cook anything. "I actually learned from *him*," JP answered, referring to the *manong* who's been cooking there for 19 years. "I didn't have my usual tools with me. There was no strainer, no blender. But he showed me very simple ways to get around that." He also described how the *tinola* was on the verge of ruin by the addition of too much rice vinegar and countering substances, but the cook managed to help save it with a little bit of patience. The *tinola* tasted great in my opinion, nobody would've been able to discern all the trouble it's seen. Then, with Tonypet leading the charge, the night devolved into karaoke with a live band, as nights like these should.

N THE MORNING BEFORE flying back to Manila, JP had one last challenge as Isabela master *kusinero*. He had to try five different kinds of *pancit*, including the *batil patong* from neighboring Tuguegarao. The fried-egg-topped *batil patong* and the quail-egg-garnished *pancit cabagan* are usually pitted against each other

in the intercity war of who makes the Best *Pancit* Ever. In the kitchen, helping prep and plate the food, JP was already thinking about how he was going to bring these tastes of the north back to Batwan. In the short but intense time he spent eating and cooking around Isabela, the province's elemental flavors had left its mark—earthy, grassy, and sanguine, sea-salty, blood-bitter, and garlicky-sweet.

Maybe you're not the type who watches *Master Chef* or *KrisTV*, so you wouldn't know the kind of impact JP has on society. Even Tracie was shocked when, in Singapore, while she was getting her nails done and her brother walked in the room, the Filipina nail technician started freaking out. "Oh my god 'day! Nandito si Chef! Can I call all my friends and get autographs?" The manicurist had to fill Tracie in on the secret lives of OFW foodies. There are a lot of women who cook, and they reference *Master Chef* on YouTube for recipes, tips and tricks. JP might not realize it, but for many Filipinas living abroad, he's their connection to the comforts of home food.

JP is an honest cook, because he is an honest person. And he is also humble, quite possibly to a fault. The Manila restaurant scene, like any other, is full of egos, cliques, and constant one-upmanship, but it is also full of camaraderie and joy. Even among the highly talented crew of chefs he hangs out with, JP does not jockey for the limelight and will be just as happy chopping onions in the back. And yet, the limelight is his. He knows how to learn, and that's what makes him a great chef. ■

IN THE TOWN OF GAMU, the chopper landed at a ranch owned by Congressman Rod Albano. "Ranch" may be too generic a term—it was more like Neverland, with guesthouses in the shape of a Mongolian yurt and a giant *nipa* hut. The main house was an exuberant Mediterranean affair with a veranda that overlooked a swimming pool and beyond that, the Cagayan river. ATVs, Hummers, and amphibious vehicles were just some of the modes of transportation used to get around the sprawling property. We were here for *merienda*, which were two versions of *pancit cabagan*, a whole suckling pig, and a very special fish baked in salt, one that is found only in the region.

When the clouds started to look sulky we hightailed it in the chopper back to Cauayan and were driven to the Governor's official guesthouse, a lovely Spanish-style property in Ilagan with a meticulously





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BACOLOD

A SLOW
IDYLL IN
SUGARLAND

When in Bacolod, do as the Negrenses do: drink early, watch time pass, and find all the reasons to eat. Because there's too much good food in Negros—from its bite-sized delicacies to the best *inasal* and the finest *kinilaw* (Enting's, of course!)—and the lifestyle that surrounds it is a perfect side dish. *Jerome Gomez* takes it all in.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GERIC CRUZ

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WHEN I THINK OF A PLACE where time stands still, I think of Bacolod. Of blue skies and riding through a terrain of rock and soil flanked by majestic sugarcane shoots. I think of the magnificent balconies in the Gaston ancestral home in Manapla, their balustrades like ornate harp strings.

I think of the ruins of the Lacson mansion in Talisay looming larger as our jeep, one of those terribly masculine ones with its roof flung open, slows down to a halt. I have a favorite picture of myself leaning by the entrance wall of these ruins, the remains of the magnificent structure built in the early 1900s by the sugar baron *Don Mariano Ledesma Lacson*, and then burned down by the Americans in the second world war to prevent Japanese forces from turning it into their headquarters. In the photograph, I am all *bakasyonista* chic: short khaki trousers, a white pique polo with the collar up, and suede Birkenstocks—a *haciendero* missing a Panama hat. I've just quit a job I've held on for nine years and I am holding instead a half-finished beer, half-drunk in the August afternoon sun, concerned only that my flat-footed friend might fall from the steep stairway he is taking the picture from, unmindful of the fact that it's noon and we haven't even made plans for lunch. The afternoon would take us outside the Bacolod Chicken House in the Lopue Complex, enjoying a plate of gleaming *inasal* and gulping as many bottles of beer as we can, unable to pick up our bags for the flight back to Manila. We were drunk and happy and it was all that mattered.

Ah, Negros. You can spend hours on end just watching life idly pass by here, whether you find yourself playing spectator-without-a-cause

from a cafe in the busier stretch of the city, or from a balcony in a house along the fabled Millionaires' Row. You lose track of time until you are faced with a drink, a reminder that it would serve your stomach well to line itself first with something solid before plunging into the first of your many cocktails for the day. You lose track of your purpose which, in my particular case, is to eat my way through the island. My visit is made not so much to arrive at a description of the region's collective culinary allure, or draw up another best-of list, but more to find if there's still reason to make a trip to Negros just to experience its food at a time when its *piayas* are in SM racks (the brand *Bailon's* is said to be Hans Sy's favorite), when the number of *inasal* joints in the country is approaching Mini Stop levels, and when its native dishes have been reinterpreted with much care, respect and success in Manila by its grateful son, JP Anglo of *Sarsa* and *Kafe Batwan*.

Luckily, my itinerary has been crafted as to conveniently give me a whiff of old world Negros and a taste of what its new blood has to offer. I will be dining in the most accessible of places but will also do lunch in a sandbar after a two-hour roadtrip and a 20-minute ferry ride. While how I choose to spend my last day is completely up to my discretion, the places where I go to for my first three days have been handpicked by my gracious guide, Ramon Uy Jr—known as Chin-chin—a major player in the island's organic farming and slow food movement, and Berna Romulo Puyat, whose job as agriculture undersecretary brings her to many places in the Philippines but whose heart is partial to Bacolod. It's the food, of course, she says, but mostly it's the people's hospitality that has endeared her to the place.

With the arrogance of a local, which I am regrettfully not, I never fail to tell first-time visitors to the province to have a drink as soon



This is what they talk about: his cousin, his mother, his *tita*, and who knows who and how. Not in the way Manila people talk about connections, of course. There's no networking agenda here, purely a joyous tracing of connectedness.

as they land. You have nothing to worry about when you're here. Not the jeepney routes or being able to hail a cab; a car will be sent for you. Fantastic spreads are laid out on equally fantastic dinner tables, with only the best china sitting under beautiful doilies that the family matriarch, or the long gone matriarch before her, crocheted herself. When one is out on the town, the Negrense, ever *galante*, will ask for the check and foot the bill. This town will spoil you rotten. You throw your cares to the Southern wind and your world is entirely in the here and now. If anyone tells you to live in the moment, ask if he's a Negrense and then you can believe him.

And so beer is the first thing we get our hands on the evening we arrive, specifically at the famous Aida's in Manokan Country, where a couple of plaques hanging on its shocking yellow walls remind me this was one of Esquire's first honorees for its Best Restaurants List back in 2012. Everything's Masskara-bright here: from the huge yellow fiberglass chicken statue by the entrance

to the pink and blue napkin and condiment holders to the mardi gras headdresses that hang on its walls. We shake hands with Toto Tarrosa who runs the place, a photography hobbyist who divides his time between this branch and its second one at the Makati Cinema Square where he also operates a small photo studio. Toto orders for us even before we could peruse the laminated yellow menu, suggesting we should definitely try the *tina-e*, which is actually *isaw*—chicken intestines boiled and, here at Aida's, cut length-

wise in the middle before it is skewered and grilled, so that whatever unpleasant-looking granules hiding in them are scraped away. In no time, my orange plate arrives containing the holy trinity of *inasal*: *isaw*, liver and *isol* (chicken ass). Everything is cooked only as orders come, Toto tells me. Everything is grilled perfectly: the *isaw* is soft and chewy, the liver tender, and biting into the *isol* is absolute buttery pleasure. There are two kinds of *inasal* in Bacolod, JP Anglo tells me in Manila days before my trip: the *inasal* of the masses, which can be found in Aida's, and the *inasal* of the *sosyal*, which is in Bacolod Chicken House. The former is on the sweet side, the other has a more salty bent. But that has nothing to do with either's social standing; just that Chicken House is all tidied up and air-conditioned, and therefore more in tune to the rudiments of the rich, while Aida's is more in keeping with the street food nature of *inasal*: smokey, humid and charred around the edges, which is why the monied Bacolodnons only come here for a takeout. Both

Pia-yeah! Nelia Tuiza is a retired school teacher who now oversees the operations at Bailon's.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Monsignor GG with portraits of his siblings behind him; a cook at Aboy's; an old hand at Bailon's *piaya*; and the heirs to Enting's throne, his kids Mark and Hannah Lobaton.





places serve the city's best *inasal*, essentially grilled chicken meat that has been marinated with vinegar, pepper, calamansi and *atsuete*.

When Geric Cruz, the photographer, arrives, all conversation shifts to tracing his family tree, and which among their members are friends with Toto and Chin-chin. Geric's mother is from Bacolod, and he is the nephew of the affable Negrense Tony Boy Escalante of Antonio's. He speaks the language confidently, having spent many school vacations in the island. For about a quarter of an hour, this is what they talk about: his cousin, his mother, his *tita*, and who knows who and how. Not in the way Manila people talk about connections, of course. There's no networking agenda here, purely a joyous tracing of connectedness, which naturally sparks a lot of walking down memory lane. It's a great ice breaker for Negrenses who have just met, and for a stranger like me, a comforting conversation to eavesdrop on, making you feel as if the island is but one small neighborhood and everyone knows everyone. Which they do.



THERE IS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT of places to eat in Negros, from the main highway of Lacson alone its possible to tire of picking which to go. Surprising, because restaurants are quite a recent phenomenon in the island. There only used to be a handful of them, until the malls started sprouting in the 2000s. "In the '70s *hindi naman lumalabas ng mga bahay ni la ang mga tao*," Aboy Evaristo tells me in his eponymous *turo-turo*-style restaurant, the best-looking, cleanest-smelling *turo-turo* you'll ever see, a favorite among Negrenses no matter the social class (it's famous for its adobong taba ng pusit, but when Tonyboy Escalan-

te is in town, he drops by here and immediately orders the oysters). "The houses were close to the city then, but the moneyed have their *kusineras* and *yayas*." The collapse of the sugar industry in the '80s began to change all that. Farm workers and household helps looked for other opportunities in Manila and abroad. The landed sold their houses in the city and moved farther out. People used to go home for lunch but that became tedious in the long run. Hence, the rise of the restaurants.

On my first day in the island, however, we decide to head out of the center and have lunch on a sliver of sand in the middle of the ocean, with a pull-all-the-stops spread of *kinilaw* fare to feast on—blue crabs, sea urchin, tuna, prawns, and the meat of the volute shell which has the lovely consistency of a perfectly cooked squid—plus an entire *lechon* stuffed with chicken. The pig is what the locals call *luntas*, or when a piglet is old enough to be taken away from its mother, a few months older than a suckling pig but not yet as big as *lechon de leche*. It is everything you imagine a great *lechon* to be: the skin crackling with the lightest poke of a finger, the meat tender and smokey and juicy and flavorful, benefiting from the stuffing and slathering of lemongrass, garlic, and *batwan*, the signature souring ingredient of Negrenses.

The *kinilaw*, of course, is as fresh as it comes, and the fact that I am having it at the sandbar in Sagay, part of a 200-hectare marine sanctuary called Carbin Reef, makes me feel like some native with a spear just emerged from the clear water brandishing his catch of the day. Of course adding to the whole grandiosity of this lunch is that all of this was prepared by Mark Lobaton, son of the great and much admired Enting, the "*kinilaw* master." Mark, handsome, humble, and unassuming has been taught by his father, as Enting was trained by his own. Enting grew up by the sea in old Sagay, and he would watch



Clockwise from top left: free-range chicken on a bed of avocados by Chef Guido Nijssen at the Museum Cafe; in-season scallops at Aboy's; seafood with risotto by Chef Nico Millanes at Terrasse Bistro; grilled blue marlin at Aboy's.

Opposite: Toto Tarrosa at Aida's in Manokan Country.

his fisherman father just dip the fish or a piece of shrimp in seawater before putting the meat in his mouth. Sometimes if there's a fresh harvest of *tuba*, or coconut juice, they would soak it in there for a couple of minutes, eat the meat, and then drink the *tuba*—a process they call *lam-aw*. When the late food critic, Do-reen G. Fernandez was looking for someone to show her how to make *kinilaw*,

having made the rounds of the country and not having found the kind of ceviche attuned to her taste, the town mayor brought her to Enting who at that time was only serving chicken *inasal* in his restaurant in Sagay, along with his famous yellow rice fried in chicken fat. Fernandez was so impressed with how the Negrense prepared her request that she called him the “*kinilaw* artist” in one of her books and thus began the legend of Enting of Sagay.

While he does seem to appreciate it, Enting says he is not completely comfortable when people make so much out of his expertise. To hear him and Mark say it, the process of preparing the *kinilaw* is terribly basic and simple: you just need the freshest seafood meat—fresh here meaning it hasn't even touched a bed of ice—and then you can do with it what you want. Rub some ginger to banish any fishy stench, sprinkle the meat with onions, tomatoes, slices of salted egg. Or eat the meat even if the rest of its body is still moving, which is how I had the day's blue crabs. There's a kind of humility involved in making a good *kinilaw*. There's no kitchen calisthenics needed, or exotic ingredients necessary, or a stint in Nobu. I don't think you can be a pompous ass and make a good *kinilaw*. There's a quiet discipline to it, almost a reverence to the handling and slicing of the meat, a recog-

There's a kind of humility involved in making a good *kinilaw*. There's no kitchen calisthenics needed, or exotic ingredients necessary, or a stint in Nobu. I don't think you can be a pompous ass and make a good *kinilaw*.

nition that most of the work has already been done, at sea, by nature. “*Kanya-kanyang panlasa naman 'yan eh*,” Enting says, “*Nagkataon lang na mas* match *yung panlasa ko sa nakakarami*.”

Humility is also a marked character of Chef Nico Millanes, despite having interned at Alain Ducasse in Paris after training on the job at the Makati Shangri-la. He is the 28-year old chef and owner of Terrasse Bistro at the rather posh Ayala Mall in Talisay called The District. I first met him playing line cook to Enting at last April's Madrid Fusion Manila, serving roasted lamb to the audience of international chefs and media. But tonight he is serving his own dishes at the two-year old Terrasse: wagyu from Bukidnon done sous vide style, then seared, and served with beef juice and roasted bone marrow; the squid carbonara, where there is no pasta involved, just squid meat sliced very thinly to become like noodles, a delicate reinterpretation of a favorite dish from one of his “idols” during his time in Paris; and then there's the braised lamb—seared first and then, with onions, carrots, celery, white wine, tomato paste, and a host of herbs and spices, braised inside the oven until the meat is so tender it falls off the bone. “Terrasse is a French bistro but I do not declare it to be fully French, because people in Bacolod always assume it will be expen-



Lunch at Carbin Reef. From top: sea urchin kinilaw, the view from the boat, and lechon stuffed with chicken roasted by Mark Lobaton.

sive and comes in small portions," says the Negros-born Millanes. While he says his technique in cooking is completely Parisienne, he is conscious that part of his bistro's identity is its locale, and so he likes to source his ingredients from the island's organic farmers and seafood suppliers, often adding specials outside of his menu, using what's around him and what's in season—which is in a way very French.

More and more chefs in Negros, Millanes among them, are favoring organically-grown produce dependent on a well-nourished soil than in the use of artificial fertilizers. While the more obvious signs of progress in the city are the huge real estate developments (Ayala's P6B project is expected to alter the Negros Occidental landscape), the real, more sustainable progress is in the rural areas where the small organic farming organizations are thriving. The more restau-

rants joining the organic movement, the better for the small farmers who all their lives have been stuck in the depressing cycle of the sugarcane plantation system where for half of the year they work and earn a measly sum, and for the next five to six months, the dead season, or what they call the *tiempo muerto*, survive on borrowing money because there's nothing to do but wait for harvest time. Hence, the Negrenses'—farm workers and *hacienderos* both—deeply ingrained lifestyle of waiting and watching time go by.

Two of the great advocates of using organic ingredients in the island is the Dutch chef Guido Nijssen and his wife Gemma, a Negrense. Guido spent many years editing a food magazine in his homeland before coming to the Philippines where he would meet his better half. It is them that I have dinner with on my third night in the island, inside the gallery of the Negros Museum where they run a small café. Guido presented a feast that evening: from a melted duck cooked in its own fat, served with a salad and boiled egg; a prosciutto dish from a slab of pork he prepared himself by rubbing it in *pulupandan* salt and then sealing it tight in plastic for 10 days; and chicken—free-range, “no antibiotics and hormone-free,”—cooked in 76 degree heat overnight, and then slow-cooked for another 15 hours in the oven. Everything is served with a different salad, something the restaurant does to teach people to put greens in their diet. Almost everything is slow-cooked, something that is inherently very Negros and reminiscent of mothers and household help waking before the sun is even up to prepare meat and poultry that will be served for lunch or dinner. Many, if not all, that ends up on the plate are from the bounty of organic farm harvests or the local markets. “It's the real thing,” Nijssen says proudly, “or we don't do it.”



IREALIZE MOST OF WHAT I ROMANTICIZE ABOUT NEGROS comes less from having visited it thrice, and drawn more from having seen *Oro Plata Mata* many times. Released in the very early 1980s, *Oro* is the story of how the second world war ravaged the lives of the rich Negrense families. It opens with a long and grand party scene in one of the ancestral houses, and fills the first half of the movie with vignettes of bucolic *hacienda* life, where the mistresses of the house lie down on *solihiya* beds being serviced by at least three of the eight female helpers, or gather round a table to play mahjong under the *santol* tree—with a househelp just a few steps away to fan them or pour their drink or open the shells of *butong pakwan* so that the quorum senyoras wouldn't have to be distracted from the tiles at hand. It is said that the island's bite-sized delicacies—the *puto* and *tortitas*, the fresh *lumpia* that doesn't need the usual brown sauce, the *banadas* and *panarra* (an oily empanada stuffed with mango sprouts)—were created specifically for this lifestyle; finger food that can be served in plates small enough to fit in between sets of mahjong tiles, so that the ladies of the house don't need to rise from their sessions and continue on playing 'til sunset.

I am met at the entrance of the Hacienda Sta. Rosalia house in Manapla—where Peque shot those *Oro* vignettes and where I was to have lunch on my second day—by Joey Gaston and his uncle, Monsignor GG, a fourth generation Gaston, descendant of the German Yves Leopold Gaston Germaine who was one of the pioneers of the sugar industry in Negros. The house, two storeys high with a watch tower, was built in 1932, done in the style of the Italian Renaissance and largely made of *balayong* wood. A snack of seriously homey and delicious *dinuguan* with the town's famous *puto* welcomed us at the reception area on the first floor, before we were ushered into the dra-



matic staircase that leads to a spacious living area and to the dining room with a table that seats 18. In the balcony next to the kitchen, a beautifully set-up buffet had been prepared by a handful of house-elp under the supervision of Monsignor GG. A feast that includes his signature *adobo milyonaryo*—perhaps thus called because it is swimming in rich olive oil and barely visible garlic— shrimp in garlic butter sauce, and a famous local dish called KBL, or *kadyos, baboy* and *langka*, a hearty pork stew made with the meat of the unripe jackfruit, and pigeon peas which needed to be soaked in water overnight to make it soft. I never tried this dish before and am quite happy to discover it a deeply satisfying soup, the liquid only mildly salty, and the pork hocks beautifully tender.

Over lunch, I ask Monsignor GG what it was like having meals in this grand dining room when he was a child. He says the table will only be stretched to this length when it's summer, when the children are back from boarding school, otherwise a portion of it was kept aside in the *bodega* for most of the year. "We never sit at the table ahead of our parents, and we never rise up from the table ahead of them," he recalls. "My mother loved to cook. All our birthday cakes she made from scratch—and we were eight!—even those sugared flowers she made herself." Dinners will always be followed by saying the rosary in Spanish, often led by the patriarch of the house, and the evening will continue on longer for the children during summer when they can stay out late. It's not all picturesque memories, of course. It was wartime, after all, and the priest remembers days when they had to burn leaflets that make their way to the property from American choppers, or that terribly scary moment when the family was lined up outside by Japanese soldiers who threatened to cut their heads off in case they are found supporting the Americans.

Everything in this farm brings back snippets of *Oro*: the *santol* trees remind me of a young Cherie Gil catching the fruit with the skirt of her dress, the watchtower where Maya Valdes espies the arrival of the Japanese forces through a telescope. Geric and I make our way to the latter with Joey Gaston who tells us this is where the men in the family would observe the plantations, spotting discolorations in some of the trees, unpleasant looking patches of sugarcane fields. You can see Panay Island from here on a clear day, but it has been raining in Negros the week of our visit, especially in the evenings. The view is, however, not less spectacular. Greens and mountains that seem to go on and on. Below us, the courtyard of Monsignor's childhood, with the couple of statues of girls each riding a turtle and a whale in a pond of lilies. I can imagine the priest as a child with his eight seven playing in the grounds, at times being wildly amused by a preview of their dinner: chickens running frantically after their heads had been cut off.

I would have trouble sleeping in this house, which is entirely made of wood, and so a gust of wind would often send its walls and floors creaking. I'd be scared to look at the huge mirrors in the evening, and the sound of pigeons humming would keep me awake til the strike of day. But I imagine having a party here, and getting a taste of the monsignor's French menu of ratatouille and beef bourgignon, with a starter of his famous French onion soup, and then having wine in one of the balconies. The Gastons are planning to open the property to tourists by early next year, installing *casitas* in the back for those who would like to stay for the evening, or for days on end. I am already excited to go back and live out my *Oro* fantasies, but I guess having one of the help pick lice from my head while I lie on a *solihiya* bed would be too much to ask in the 21st century.

NEGROS IS ABOUT TO GO INTO another war this year, and some people predict a *tiempo muerto* that may possibly not end. Sugar traders from other Asian countries will be able to export sugar to the Philip-

pines with little to no taxes, which will make their produce so much cheaper and therefore more attractive to the local market and big businesses. Still beset to these days with un-modernized sugar mills, lack of government support, and the repercussions that Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) wrought, there's no telling how Negros will survive battling it out with the world's sugar giants. True, a part of Negros have diversified into organic farming, and Chin-chin tells me the island is now 98 percent rice-sufficient. The country's richest too are buying acres of sugarcane plantations in the island, not to produce sugar but to produce ethanol, for power generation. But what could this mean for Negros and its people in the long run?

Ah, but business talk is tedious and nostalgia always ever easy, like a good stick of weed that pulls you back to the chaise longue and makes you look at the outside world through rain-soaked glass windows. Which was how I spent my last day in the province, inside a beautiful 1920s home surrounded by lush mabolo and santol trees, a wooden structure in the American Colonial style that was considered modest during its time but would be deemed grand in the present, if only because it has earned that patina of stateliness the way buildings do when it survives the ravages of climate and time. I have been invited here by the gentleman Alvaro Perttierra who has been in charge of the place's upkeep for the past few years, transforming what was once his grandmother's bedroom suite into a charming modern bohemian lair full of contemporary art and various tchotchkies from travels abroad. The agenda was to meet here first and then he would take me to this hole in the wall in a *pala-pala*, their version of *dampa*, which serves the best crab rice. But making the trip to a marketplace seems a most unsuitable idea in this rain. So he was thinking Pendy's instead, where Bacolod's ladies who lunch gather, where the Napoleones, I heard, is to die for, and where we could have a bowl of piping-hot *callos* which would be excellent in this weather.

But first, a drink. And yes, it's only half past noon. He brings in a bottle of Maker's Mark into his suite and then hands me a glass full of ice in which he pours the bourbon, followed by soda water. Its as simple as cocktails come, as uncomplicated as the day's goals, which are

Its as simple as cocktails come, as uncomplicated as the day's goals, which are to eat, kill time, and catch the early evening flight back to Manila. .

to eat, kill time, and catch the early evening flight back to Manila. One drink turns into two after awhile, consumed in between stories of the house (originally owned by an Ilonggo couple before it became the private quarters of a Japanese captain during the war), and Mr. Perttierra's days in New York as a young man, earning Steve Rubell's nod of approval and being let in into Studio 54 even if he was way below the legal drinking age. He sends the male househelp for more ice and soda and we talk some more, and smoke some more. He puts Portishead on the speakers, and I ask about the stunning Kiri Dalena black and white photograph on the wall, showing a blindfolded Rizal bust with placards below it, its messages of outrage all but erased, a portrait of history blinded and obliterated. As we're about to finish our second rounds, we're both happily drunk and I suggest we don't need to do lunch anyway, but Alvaro insists on taking me out. We agreed to have just another half of the drink, but then he fills the glass anyway, and I look at the window and only the leaves outside move and there's no telling if its still early or late in the afternoon. "Time stops when



you're in Bacolod," I say, like a sigh of surrender. And we both laugh. Eventually, by 3 p.m., we manage to make it out of the house and settle into Cafe Uma. But we only ended up ordering another round of drinks, and chicken liver paté, because they were out of arugula for the limoncello pasta, which was the only thing Alvaro wanted. Alvaro walked to the nearby Felicia's and got me five of their famous *ensaymadas* for *pasalubong*. It was still gloomy outside and we sat at one of the tables by the covered walkway, eventually befriending three local kids who were asking for money. I ended up with a shot of whiskey, Alvaro with a glass of red wine, and the boys the liver paté.

By the time I am dropped off at the house where I am to pick up Geric, it is almost 5pm, about an hour and a half before we need to be at the Bacolod airport. There's not much time to spend with Geric's aunt Jane who he so wants me to meet. Happily, we didn't need extra time to break the ice between us, Jane and I. We clicked immediately and Geric just watched in awe. *Tita* Jane, as Geric calls her, is a spunky lady who, like a true learned *tita*, likes to dispense such nuggets of wisdom as "Why play safe when you can reach for the moon, you dummy." Or "Don't be a coward, not at your old age." I ask her about dinners and lunches at home when she was growing up and she just sulks, looking like a child who refuses to be fed, and says, "I hate food." Geric and I laugh. It was the perfect ending to four days of food exploring.

Because indeed there's more to life than this current obsession with eating. There's San Mig Light and cigarettes, for starters, which is Jane's sustenance of choice, and which we both enjoy as we speak. There's life itself, and hers is as lived as they come, having been an anti-Marcos activist when she was younger, despite the fact that she is a Benedicto, a relation of the Marcos crony Roberto. She used to run a bar called KGB, or Korean Grill and Bar, which was the province's answer to Penguin Cafe, hosting local artists such as Peque Gallaga and the painter Charlie Co, a precursor to what is now known as Bacolod's Art District. She's fallen in love and out of it when she realized she valued her independence more, and so she is, at 71, single and proud of it. We end up singing about it, right there and then, around the dinner table, with Jane's younger sister, about loves lost (Streisand's "My Heart Belongs To Me") and shameless obsession (Didith Reyes's "Bakit Ako Mahiya?"), in between sips of beer and puffs of Marlboro Lights. Eventually, Geric reminds us of the time. It's nearly six o'clock and our flight is at 7:20. I tell him I really don't care, don't worry about it. "So what if you miss it?" Jane says. "If that is what's meant to be." And I felt like Jessie at the end of *Before Sunset*, unable to leave his chair, trapped between worry and surrender, drunk in the alluring present, calculating the consequences of a future, and about to fall in love all over again. As the chauffeur waits outside, and the last strains of an Apo Hiking song continues on the speakers, we say our goodbyes, exchange embraces like long lost friends, and light another cigarette. ■





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Memories of Overdevelopment: the VOCAS (Victor Oteyza Community Art Space) is a sanctuary for local artists, situated at the roof deck of a mid-rise building at the center of Baguio City.



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BAGUIO

BEER,
BOHEMIA,
AND BLOOD
ON MY JEANS

Boiled pig snout. Blood sausages. A pint of craft beer brewed with Sagada oranges, clubbing to country music, and drinking with a bone hunter. *Kara Ortiga* visits Baguio to gorge on their local food—only to find a more interesting, outré side to the Cordilleras.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARTU NEPOMUCENO

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X



ICAME UP TO BAGUIO TO DEVOUR SOME DOG MEAT. To be more exact, I was sent to explore the food culture of the region, to scour the city for their best eats via a local who would lead the way—and since it is known that Baguio is home to one of the largest dog meat markets in the country, gnawing on the hound was just an obvious part of the itinerary.

Dao-es or dog rituals are the highest form of animal sacrifice for some tribal groups in the northern region. For people of the Ibaloi tribe, dogs are sacrificed to greet the spirits of the dead; others practice it to drive away misfortune, or as a form of ritual healing. As the ways of the world change, though, so have the methods of consumption. In modern times, dog eating has become a delicacy, served as *ulam* or paired as *pulutan* to warm the body when it's cold. My brother had some *caldereta* dog once. He's been bitten three times by different pups, since. "They can smell it in you," I told him.

I intend to completely immerse myself in the banquets of Baguio. So I prepped for weeks, ready to gobble the dog meat when the need arises. Only to be disappointed to find, once up in the mountains, that dog meat has been banned since 1998, when the government approved an Animal Welfare Act exhorted by animal rights groups—a move that the locals thought was undeserved, as the cultural practice has been long-standing. By the early 2000s, laws

toughened even more, and any stall that served pooch was raided. Just like everything else unlawful though—drugs, corruption, and prostitution—dog meat can still be eaten if you really seek it. There are stories of elders who go out of their way to search for dog meat soup, yearning to taste the meat again before they completely lose the chance to in this earthly life—treating it as a delicate last meal of sorts.



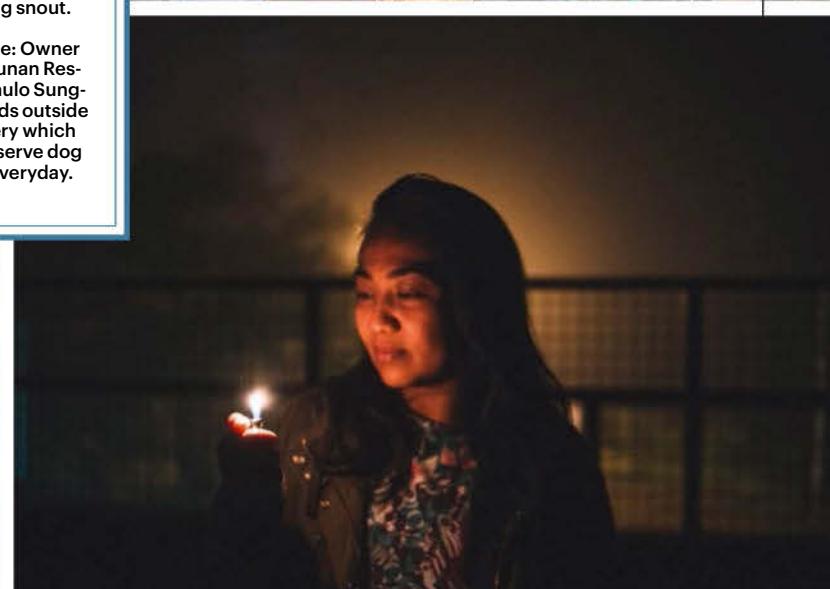
I MEET THE ARTIST KAWAYAN DE GUIA on a rainy Wednesday afternoon. He was tapped (forced?) to be my guide for the trip, as this is the place where he was raised—having soaked up the raw energy of local artists, with an open mind to the sensitivities of neighboring indigenous cultures, and a spiritual closeness to nature. We trudge through the foggy city with his girlfriend, award-winning hyperrealist painter Nona Garcia, who relocated to these mountains two years ago. Nona just finished a show in Basel, Switzerland, in which she paints, in ravishing detail, objects delicately wrapped in cloth. Ironically,

Baguio showed itself to me through the eyes of local artists—one meal, one tête-à-tête, and one bottle of beer at a time.



Clockwise from top left: Kawayan De Guia's bloody finger; the art installation at Katipunan Resto Art; artist Nona Garcia; and *nguso* or pig snout.

Opposite: Owner of Katipunan Resto Art, Paulo Sungay, stands outside his eatery which used to serve dog meat everyday.



one of those subjects is her beloved dog, Jacob. She recalls that when Jacob passed, she had to cling wrap his corpse herself to preserve his body, distressed and in tears. Jacob, blanketed in baby blue fabric, is now a masterpiece, recently displayed in one of the biggest art fairs in the world. *"Kumain ka na ng aso with me please,"* I prod her, just 20 minutes after our introductions. *"Ano ka ba! Ayoko nga,"* she argues fervently. Nona doesn't even eat meat.

Kawayan on the other hand, has no qualms about it. "In 100 years, you can see how things changed here. From how you dress, to how you talk, to whom you pray to," says Kawayan. And now that the meat is banned, it is like the times are requiring the local people to change their palate as well. For the government to expect a culture that has been eating dog for ages to suddenly nod towards western proclivity, and expect them to savor a slab of steak or foie gras instead (as if force-feeding ducks were less offensive), seems rather unfair. "In India, cows are sacred," Kawayan points out. By banning dog meat, "you're not just killing the taste of the people here, but you're also killing the vein of a major culture."

At first blush, Kawayan appears more formal than I had envisioned. I watched his father, independent filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik, receive an honorary award about six years ago from my college when I was a starry-eyed undergrad. Kidlat wore a *bahag* and played a *gangsa*, branding himself as the Third Cinema indie-genius (slash indigenous) artist, despite his Masters Degree from Wharton; so I kind of expected the same kind of projection. But I learned that just like this city, Kawayan unfolds by layer, one at a time. Checking to see if you, the visitor, will understand the aberrant nature of their life; if you, the *conyo* Manila-dweller, can handle the surreal nature of the Baguio he has known and loved. I would find out later on that I wasn't just going to sit pretty at restaurants and talk fancy about their food, but I was

going to witness a more bizarre Baguio reveal itself to me, through the eyes of local artists, which unfurls intimately one meal, one tête-à-tête, and one bottle of beer at a time.



AT A DINGY BACKSTREET behind the Dangwa Bus terminal, we saunter towards Katipunan Resto Art, located in an area which, since the '50s, was called an *asuan* or the dog meat market. Food stalls here were known for having *aso* on their menu regularly, consumed mostly by pocket miners and farmers, and then later on by professionals and students. It is tucked somewhere along beerhouses and *carinderias*, a wet market, and stalls selling fresh fruits, raw meat, or value packs of the traditional *nganga*—the ivy leaf, *apog*, and tobacco that the locals chew on until their teeth are stained crimson. This is where Kawayan's circle of creatives go to drink. The renegade space exhibits cenotaphs of the dog eating culture instead, immortalizing that facet of their life via installations. Cyan-colored wooden benches are vandalized with lyrics: "Who let the dogs out" or "How much is that doggie in the window?" Stickers of lovable canines are plastered everywhere: Goofy, Snoopy, Bolt, that golden retriever from the Pixar movie *Up*. They're obviously there to mock—a jeer at the colonial West that insists that dogs are man's best friends.

Kawayan has gathered his group of friends to join us for the night, each character perhaps just as eccentric as the next—(myself included)—the outsiders. There's a writer and native of the region, already drunk and talking about the mining cultures of the past—something about sex and drinking before entering the tunnels. There's a 26-year-old wood carver whom they call Dehon (an Ifugao version of his name Jason), who carries himself with an ethnic swagger, and has really





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nice biceps. There's a bone hunter named Santos, who has long, stringy hair that falls to his waist. Santos has spent 17 years of his life de-graving the bones of about 9,000 Japanese warriors. He says he can tell immediately when the skeletons belong to a woman, a man, or a child. He has nightmares sometimes, believing the ghosts haunt him. But he has been trained to pray over them. We're a group of about 12, with Kawayan and Nona leading the pack. Everyone in the group has had a taste of dog. The meat is gamey, they say. It is dark. It feels warm when it slides down your throat.

But I would never know now. So we have the next best things instead.

Immediately, plates of animal parts are served. We have some pig tongue or *dila*, some *tinung*, and *ping-ping ng baka*—all sautéed, seasoned, and topped with crunchy green scallions, meant to be dipped in a generous amount of fresh chili, *toyo*, and *suka*. We eat boiled *nguso*, or pig snout. The meat is extra fatty, and the skin crunchy like soft cartilage. We drink hot *bulalo* soup from plastic cups. I scoop the marrow out and let it melt like delicate butter in my mouth, soft and warm and milky.

Soon enough, dirty shot glasses are whipped out, and so is a bottle of *tapuy* (local rice wine). It is packaged in a recycled bottle of GSM, and produced from fermented rice, organic yeast, and molasses. It's strong, but tastes super sweet, like a poor man's Pisco Sour. But before the first sip, you must offer the first shot to the gods or *atang*. Every bottle of alcohol opened is always offered to the gods first. They pour a small amount onto the cap of the bottle, and leave it to the side. Or discard the first shot to the cosmos. *Atang*.

By 8 p.m., with *tapuy* warming my body, everyone takes their turn at the karaoke. Nona belts out to "No Rain." Someone else sings Radiohead. And at 10 p.m., with the Katipunan Resto closing down, we decide to move to Magsaysay Ave., an area popular for their brothel houses. We're going to go clubbing—Baguio style.

In between Katipunan Resto and Magsaysay Ave., someone manages to nick a bouquet of fresh red roses. We head to a sprawling bar called Baguio Country Sounds with security guards as bouncers frisking you down and confiscating anything they deem threatening: a ball pen, your umbrella. But inside, the bar gives no real sense of danger. There's a disco ball and a live band on stage. The music is very show band, the setup is very variety show. In the men's bathroom, a drunk man is getting a massage from a blind masseuse. The place is dead on a Wednesday night, so we move across the street to a folk bar called Liwliwa, lit by stark, red neon lights, with paper hearts adorning the walls, as if Valentine's Day were only months ago—or maybe in Liwliwa, there is always a time for romancing.

The bouquet of roses follows us there, where Santos the bone hunter has started to distribute them to the people of Liwliwa—one rose for the chubby waitress with a beanie; one for the man trying to sell us cigarettes; one for the guitarist from the live band on stage; one for a random drunk guy sitting behind us, who in turn, gives the rose to me. "This is for you," he slurs. "That is for you because I love you," he says, with a toothless, tobacco-stained grin.

As soon as I'm seated at our long table, I realize I've never seen so many drunk old men passed out in a bar, ever. It's not just one table of men who had one too many, but five or six tables of men with their

As soon as I'm seated at our long table, I realize I've never seen so many drunk old men passed out in a bar, ever.



Perfumed Nightmare: Kawayan lights a cigarette along Assumption Road, outside the Ili-likha Artist's Village, which is Kidlat Tahimik's continuous work in progress, built from salvaged wood and constructed around the original nature of the space.



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heads nestled on their arms.

In between bottles of overflowing Red Horse Grandes, a few bags of Chippy, and three plates of apple slices as *pulutan*—a fight ensues on the side. Drunk boys challenge each other face to face. A

girl falls on her ass to the floor. Someone steals a pack of cigarettes from our table, and Rocky Cajigan, a local artist with the most amazing set of tattoos, yanks the pack back with flair. Kawayan calls me over, “if someone here asks you to dance, you can’t say no,” he warns. “I won’t,” I exclaim, maybe a little too overeager for one old man to courteously ask me for a dance. But like, who wouldn’t want that?

Later on, as some intoxicated senior seems to be set on asking me for a dance, a man from our group whom they call *Barangay Captain*, reaches his hand out to me first. He is a few inches shorter than me, has grey hair down to his shoulders, and a low raspy voice. He leads me to the front of the bar, and we slow dance, his hands on my hips, me twirling to his groove. Five minutes later: “Let’s go back. I was just saving you,” he tries to say. He’s not really a *kapitan*. It’s just another of his monikers—the group’s inside joke.

By 2 a.m., most of us are on the floor dancing. Even Kawayan, in his towering mestizo authority and poster boy good looks, takes to the floor, swaying and performing to the ballad. His name is often whispered about the city. In Manila, he is recognized as one of the finest artists of the day, building sculptures of iridescent rockets, or Lady Liberty with her face on the floor. But in Baguio,

he seems as much a local as everyone else, even when he sticks out like a sore thumb. “I’m fucking Robin Hood,” he’ll tell me, about the cautionary line between his art selling for loads of money—and his more virtuous anti-capitalist art sentiments in the mountains.

On the dance floor, our small group gathers into a circle, hands clinging over each other’s shoulders, happily springing around an imaginary bonfire. It’s not really the gyrating I am more accustomed to, but it feels like a communal celebration, with people I had literally just met five hours before.

And then I need to pee. But this is the kind of place where, if you’re peeing in one cubicle, a couple could be banging on the other, shares Kawayan. Apparently, bathrooms in Baguio country bars are where the action’s at. I really have to pee though, and it was nearing 3 a.m. anyway, so we decide to call it a night.



FOR WHATEVER ODDITIES the nightlife of Baguio brings, the mornings unfold in the most exquisite of ways. I watch the drizzling rain as it patters on the rooftops from my room, a misty fog wispy enveloping pine trees. I’d prefer to snuggle in my bed instead, but my tummy is grumbling. And I have yet to see what Baguio has to offer when the sun is out.

Because of the high-altitude, the coffee from the mountains is superb. At Café Yagam, they have locally

Artistic bonds tie filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik (right) with his second son, artist Kawayan De Guia.

Opposite (from top): the nightlife at Liwliwa; photographer Artu captures a scene from the men’s bathroom at Baguio Country Sounds; and locals eagle-dance at the bars, traditional Ifugao style.



grown, handpicked, and freshly roasted single-origin coffee—the premium Arabica beans are French-pressed and served with authentic Cordilleran dishes. “What makes it distinctly Cordilleran is that geographically, we cook based on whatever ingredients are available in the mountains. Some of the ingredients that we have come from Tabuk or Ifugao, so that is always the center of the food,” says Carla Rosito, owner of the café.

Here, recipes are borrowed from nearby regions. Their *pinuneg*, a Cordilleran blood sausage, is made traditionally by the Kankanaey people of Benguet for special occasions, and served usually to the elders first. From the root word *uneg* (inside), the *pinuneg* was a resourceful way to make use of the innards of a pig. A butchered pig, like many other butchered animals in this region, is a form of sacrifice. *Pinuneg* is delicious dipped in their native vinegar and chili sauce. Eaten with a siding of fresh greens, and *balatinaw* or violet mountain rice, it is the perfect hearty meal to soothe a night out of binge drinking.

Then there is their native chicken soup *pinikpikan*: a smokey chicken broth or *kiniig*, with sun-dried and salted cured meat or *etag*. In this process, the chicken is bruised (*pikpik*) to clot the blood, so that the meat becomes tastier. And then a process of burning follows it. “An essential part of the preparation is the burning of the feathers because it emanates smoke, which symbolizes a calling.” The preservation of the meat is natural. And when it’s done, a dash of *tapuy* completes the soup.

Yagam feels like home: fresh flowers atop large wooden vases, an open-air hallway to read a book or pass time. And after lunch, a long, slow drag from a cigarette. This is our flow in the city: slow moving, almost melancholic and gray, in a peaceful sort of lonesome way.



ND THEN THERE IS THE DELECTABLE PART of Baguio, formed by some homegrown chefs and inspired by international cuisine. On the quieter road Outlook Drive, we find Chef’s Home—a small restaurant serving the most excellent Asian fusion food on melamine plates, tacky floral tablecloths, and incongruent tiled floors.

Christian worship music blasts from the speakers. A psalm is scrawled somewhere on their walls. There’s a bit of a disconnect actually—to have delicious Peranakan food served in a place like this, which was originally just a *kainan* behind a *sari-sari* store five years ago. But it’s this odd mix of religious devotion and ingenious Asian gustation that paints a beautiful and anomalous picture of what Baguio has become. They cook up a feast: Crispy Papaya Salad (fresh *papaya* deep-fried in their special batter, and served traditional Thai style with fish sauce, coriander, chili, and tomatoes); a spicy *tom yum* soup (sometimes served with salmon belly instead of prawns, depending on what’s fresh in the market); and a fried tilapia slathered in two different sauces: tamarind or chili with basil, both finger-licking good. I wash the entire meal down with a glass of lime juice. “This is a fusion restaurant. So I like to fuse foods, to confuse people,” says the chef.

If it isn’t Asian fusion that’s surprisingly exceptional in Baguio, it’s woodfire brick oven pizza, served at a shabby hotel you would never take a first date to. Amare sits unobtrusively across an office full of computers and ugly fluorescent lighting. But the waft of freshly baked pizza, and the heat from their large brick oven will lure you in. We have the foie gras pizza: doused with a generous amount of truffle oil, melted mozzarella and foie gras. It’s so decadent that in its outlandish attempt, you feel so fucking proud you just savored brick oven pizza topped with duck liver...in Baguio.

Good food can also always be found in the corners of the city. If it isn’t the slow-cooked Balbacua at Kidlat Tahimik’s Ili-likha Artist’s Village, or the steaming Anak ng Puttanesca pasta spiced with cayenne





Baguio's best eats: authentic Japanese food set in a wooden cottage at Chaya; best Italian dishes from Amare; Asian fusion from Chef's Home; Sri-Lankan Pork Curry in a Tagine pot from Hill Station; and stills from Baguio Craft Brewery with their owners Chris Ordas and Francis Blanco.





Kawayan resumes ripping more holes in my pants until he cuts himself, blood dripping from his middle finger onto the pavement, the bar, and all over my knees.

at VOCAS, toothsome dishes are situated in the historic architecture left behind by the Americans. The Miele Guide-listed Hill Station at Casa Vallejo never fails to impress with their upscale SriLankan-inspired fine dining. While Chaya, an authentic Japanese restaurant, is set in a homey cottage with hand-sewn quilts embellishing their cobblestone walls. Here, I warm myself with tender beef sukiyaki soup, and a flute of jelly peach-flavored sake.

The rain never stops. And during this season, they say most people decide to stay in. It's a low season for restaurants, but I realize, this is the best time for any visitor to come up to the mountains—because at this time, simple things like a warm meal and a quiet moment offer an incredible sense of comfort.



ON MY SECOND NIGHT OUT with Kawayan and the crew, we sit perched on a wooden bench outside Baguio Craft Brewery, located on a non-descript building along a major highway. I'm nursing an IPA called Zigzagger: a 10 percent alcohol content, triple-hopped beer brewed with natural oranges from Sagada.

In the Brewery, there is a selection of about 15 flavors—all concocted by owner Chris Ordas. Chris is a genius at the craft, a sensei of beer, or just a “raging alcoholic,” as he would say. He's made kiwi-strawberry-passion fruit-flavored wheat beers for the ladies; and successfully pulled off a chocolate-flavored stout and a Mexican lager. All are made with natural ingredients—no chemicals or extenders—so that you wake up the next day with no hangover. A far cry from the pretentious craft beer joints in Manila, which serve pints that are too sweet, too bitter, too tasteless, or too boring, and always, *always*, overpriced.

Chris used to homebrew from his garage in Canada before moving back to the Philippines, blending foreign ingredients and experimenting with local ones. Once, he was able to craft a beer from a local *ube* base—something that has never been done before. It was called Falling Rocks, a white stab beer. And though he, with business partner Francis Blanco have to pay P30.28 of taxes per liter (versus the P19.00 tax that San Miguel Beer shells out), they are willing to fight the big fight.

The artisans of food here seem to respect the craft more than they do the brand. There is a sincerity to every dish served—a deference to their practice. I came here to discover their regional chow in a way I hoped Anthony Bourdain would be proud of, but found that what is best is not to overanalyze the food, but to feel the sincerity put into it. To acknowledge that stripped down, it is really just damn good food.

Two pints of pale ale, one pint of wheat beer, a sip of Yamazaki whiskey from Kawayan's flask, and a few puffs of weed later—I find myself slowly falling in love with this queer city, and even more so with the idiosyncratic group of locals I've enjoyed being around.

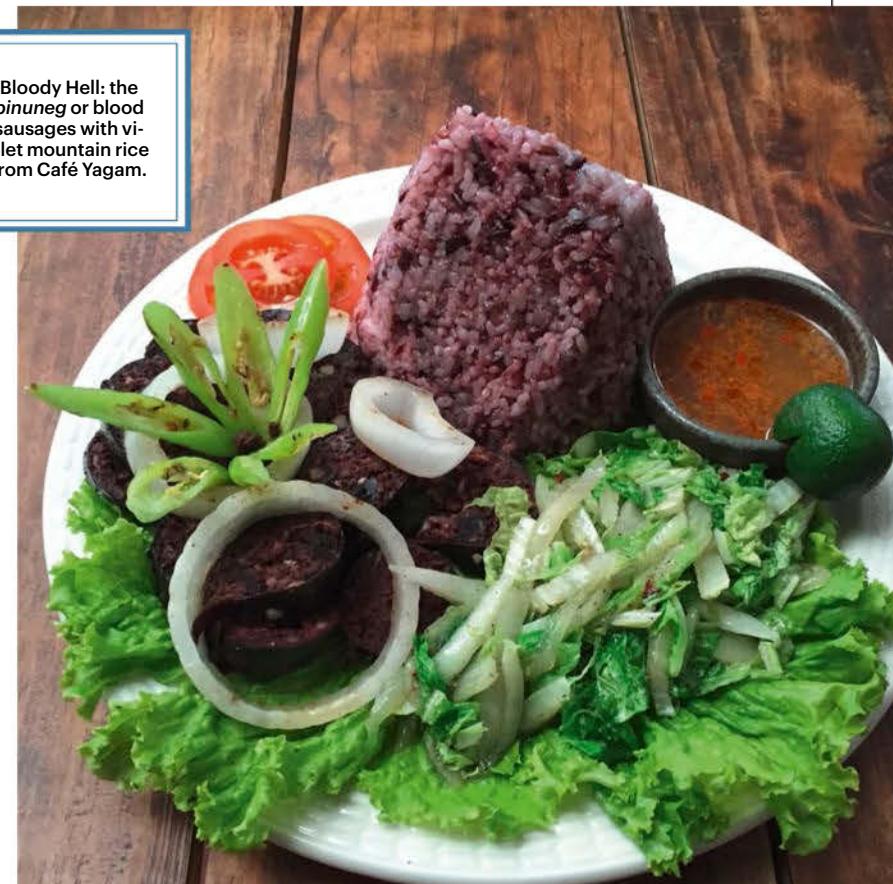
After an intimate conversation with Nona about how the city allowed her more time for herself and her craft—Kawayan

tumbles outside to join us, and notices the artificial slits on my jeans. He picks up his pocketknife, kneels in front of me, and begins to slice

through the cloth of my pants himself, ripping it apart and cutting holes in places that Topshop originally didn't. He takes a marker and draws an eye on my left knee. Nona is coerced to scribble on my right. Kawayan resumes ripping more holes on my pants until he cuts himself, blood dripping from his middle finger onto the gray pavement, onto the bar table, all over my knees. He smears his bloody finger over my exposed skin, where it quickly turns into clotty streaks. It's past midnight—the fog grows thicker outside, and beyond the faint orange lights from the houses in the distance—darkness.

We're drunk already. There are faint traces of blood everywhere. The discourse is beautiful and flowing. Kawayan shares a story about how his father Kidlat had to deal with getting the best compliment of his life, and then dealing with the death of his mother, both on the same day, like a symbolic re-birth—I almost cry. There is warmth in the company. A personal playlist is plugged to the speaker system. We warble loudly and argue about life and love and art and farts. We toast relentlessly. The Brewery is already closed, chairs placed on top of the tables making way for the staff to sweep the floors. This is it, I think to myself. It's ending. I came up here to get a peek of an underground Baguio as an outsider, led by an insider; to eat and drink in places that someone might not find on *Lonely Planet*, only to discover a more kaleidoscopic Baguio I could never have imagined.

Kawayan De Guia squats on the floor of the hallway, looking up at us with an inebriated glow. It's nearing 3 a.m. And in a romantic surrender, the artist professes, “you know what... we're fucked,” he says, the rest of us responding only with a still silence and reverence. The rain continues to pour. We happy few are the last-standing oddballs of the night. “But the only thing you can do about that,” he says, “is just to enjoy it.” ■



GENE GONZALEZ

CHEF AND OWNER OF CAFÉ YSABEL | INTERVIEWED BY ERWIN ROMULO | PHOTOGRAPHED BY ARTU NEPOMUCENO

► **I first started cooking** when I could stand on a stool.

► **I grew up** in a Sulipena household [Sulipan is a town that no longer exists], the prime area of eating in Pampanga. It's a little like New Orleans, very Creole, with influences from the Basque, the French, the Spaniards, all the seafarers who've docked on the riverside.

► **The Kapampangan household** revolved around food. Poetry, everything, it was all around food, and the house was big enough to have parties all the time. My grandmother was kind of a socialite, but in a foodie kind of way. You had all the big names coming during lunch. The Escuderos, Lopezes, Cojuangcos, they were all there.

► **Since I was the eldest kid**, I got to hang out with the kitchen staff. It was nice because you always got the best delicacy portions. The heart of the chicken, the tail of the lechon, and the lechon was done in-house, slaughtering was done there. In the morning you wake up, grab an egg from the poultry. You want fresh chicken? Kill it. You want *kalapati*, we had big pigeons. And turkeys.

► **My father** was very astute about putting value on things. And also of family representation. He didn't want you to make an ass of yourself in front of other people, he was very strict about that. He was a disciplinarian, so you had to be prim and proper. My mom was a little different, she was from the artistic side. She was very musically inclined. Give her an instrument—she could play anything.

► **My dad** actually wanted me to work corporate. I went into the money market. I did a good job of learning things because you get to eat from the best tables, you get to treat out the treasurers of other companies, and you get to call them by their first names even though you're a kid.

► **When you are entertaining**, you should know what they want to eat. Or what their propensity for eating would be. But you have to take charge of their lives while they're seated on the table.

► **When I watched** *Who is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?* after I resigned, I really wanted to become a chef. I was cooking for my friends, but a year after I set up the café it was pretty boring. I started running out of ideas. I couldn't sustain what I was doing. I was just empty.

► **In the late '80s** I studied in France. In between I washed dishes and worked odd jobs. I worked in Michelin star restaurants. In Europe, I saw how people dined. Then I came back and I was filled with ideas again.

► **After Europe** I traveled all throughout Asia and the learning experience has never stopped. I've attended several schools and I wanted to set up a school that was set up by chefs. If you go full circle you go back to your roots. You go back to Filipino cuisine and Filipino ingredients.

► **We had formed a group** called Alta Cucina Filipina, and we were

lucky to have the late Doreen Fernandez as our patroness. She loved the work we were trying to do, but it was actually in the guise of having nothing at all. We didn't have any imported meats, any imported wines, we would scrounge around for anything we could get. So anything homegrown, which is now coming back, the farm to table concept. But we were getting homegrown stuff back then because there was really nothing else.

► **The restaurant scene now**, it's not pretentious, it's just that you have a lot of risk takers who just repeat a concept that they pick up abroad, and the concept would be haphazardly done and it will fizzle out eventually.

► **Unless you have** a unique selling proposition you want to introduce in your restaurant, Manila is a very cruel place to try to compete in. If you open, in six months you'll know whether you have to close shop or not. And you're going to be amassing losses of millions in six months.

► **A national cuisine** will take more than just a national consciousness. It will be a total effort of the business sector, the artist sector, and the government. We need foodie politicians, or we need politicians like Joey Salceda, we need people who have the foresight to say, "We can make this appeal to the foreigners by doing this." We cannot just stick to what looks like crap. The way they did it in Thailand, it took an American PR firm to do the look of their food. And now if you order a Tom Yum, more or less you know what you're going to get.

► **The satisfaction in doing all this is** getting a compliment from the guest. That's all. You can have all the reviews but you get a compliment from someone who's gastronomically adept and you get a compliment from someone with a very innocent palette, that's the best reward that you can get for toiling your way, giving up your vacations.

► **Chefs can be** very subservient people in the sense their ultimate goal is to please people, get a compliment. We're in the pleasing business.

► **I was a karate instructor** for 12 years. You never perfect a technique. You always aspire for that one punch or blow where you devastate an opponent, but you never really get there.

► **My grand aunt** would actually say [about food] "It's to die for." And she actually did die. All my relatives died because of food related ailments or food related experiences. My grandma had a heart attack because she was snacking on peanuts. Her mother died after consuming a whole bottle of champagne and a whole small platter of paella.

► **I went through cancer surgeries**, radiation therapy, and two times I went into a crisis. Not because of the cancer. Not because I was going to die, but because one of the two things I like best in this world would have to be cut out. Those two things are food and sex.

► **The difference between love and sex** is just like in food, if you add a little love to it, it becomes richer. 

A chef in a white jacket with a black vest and a Philippines flag patch is cooking over a campfire. He is holding a pan with fish and vegetables. Another pan with an egg is cooking on the fire. Skewers with marshmallows are roasting on the right. A stack of wood is in the background.

Chef Gene, who opened Cafe Ysabel in 1982 and founded the Center for Asian Culinary Studies, is also a two-time gold medalist in fencing at the SEA Games.

A person is sitting in a wooden armchair with intricate carvings. They are wearing a light-colored, possibly silk, robe and a dark belt with a prominent buckle. Their hands are resting on their lap, holding a book. The lighting is warm and focused on the person, creating a relaxed and sophisticated atmosphere.

Esquire / STYLE

SLOW FADE

A languorous mood permeates the air, turning everything invitingly soft and sleepy. Fits are a bit looser and construction is softer. Everything appears easier, but it never looks careless. Here's how to look good even while chilling out.

Photographs by SHAIRA LUNA

Styling by CLIFFORD OLONDAY

Art Direction by CES OLONDRIZ and EDRIC DELA ROSA



Shirt and pants by Ziggy
Savella, ziggysavella.com. **Bracelet** (bottom) by
Louis Vuitton, Greenbelt
4. **Scarf** (on sofa) by
Hermès, Greenbelt 3.





Jumpsuit by Ziggy Savella, ziggysavella.com. **T-shirt** and **bracelet** (on right wrist) by Hermès, Greenbelt 3. **Bracelet** by Louis Vuitton, Greenbelt 4.

Opposite: **Jacket** (P103,998) by Valentino at Univers, One Rockwell. **Scarf** by Hermès, Greenbelt 3. **Hat** at Firma, Greenbelt 3.





Shirt by Koike (P6,700)
and jeans (P9,300) by
Care Label, both at Tryst
Studio, Active Fun Building,
Bonifacio Global City, +63
928 559 0499. **Suspenders**
at Firma, Greenbelt 3.



Jacket, shorts, and
bracelet by Hermès,
Greenbelt 3.



REWIND

THIS WAS WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE a hundred years ago: slow, picturesque, grand. Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar, the heritage resort in Bataan, feels otherworldly. In the distance, a wall of mighty mountains rises up from rice fields. A river wends its way through a picturesque *pueblo* into the arms of the ocean that, on a particularly rainy day, is roaring with waves. And all around you, on cobblestone streets set with rocks as big as chicken eggs, is a replica of a hotel in Escolta from the 1900s, a *bahay na bato* that dates back to 1890, and wooden houses on stilts. These will be your home on your weekend retreat. Gathered from different parts of the country and reconstructed brick by brick and plank by plank in the 400-hectare estate, the traditional Filipino houses carry you to the nostalgic glory of the past. Though the structures use most of their original parts to recreate the charms of yesteryear, contemporary amenities have been installed for your comfort—expect deep sleep on the magnificently carved four-poster bed in Casa Bizantina. And if you are curious about the provenance of all these great houses, guided walking tours are held regularly. What else can you do? Apart from the traditional massages at Napiya Spa or a dip in their swimming pool or the private beach, make your way to the Salon de Juego, where you can take part in old-time pastimes like *sungka*, *trumpo*, and *tumbang preso*. It's time to turn off your phone and immerse yourself in a sepia-toned reverie.

Barangay Ibaba, Bagac, Bataan. +632 546 9123, +63 917 872 9371. lascasasfilipinas.com.



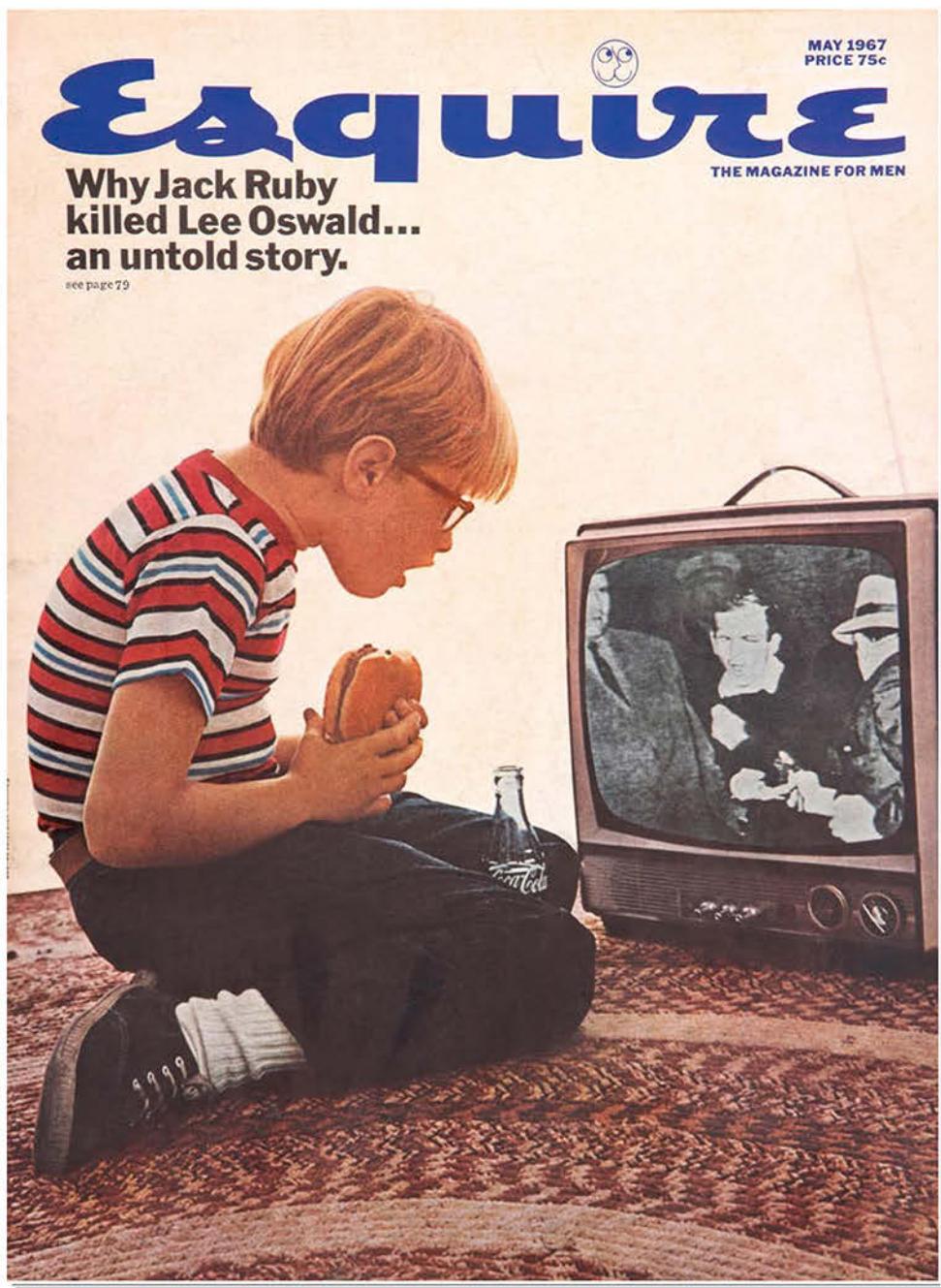


Jacket and **scarf** by Hermès, Greenbelt 3.

Opposite: **Coat** by Kaye Morales, kayemorales.com. **Shirt** by Ziggy Savella, ziggysavella.com.

Pants (P23,998) by Jil Sander at Univers, One Rockwell. **Belt** at Firma, Greenbelt 3. **Pins** and **medal** at AC+632, Greenbelt 5. **Shoes** (P6,900) by Castañer at Tryst Studio, Active Fun Building, Bonifacio Global City, +63 928 559 0499.

WITH THANKS TO
LAS CASAS FILIPINAS
DE ACUZAR
MODEL CARLOS
DEL PRADO
GROOMING
MARY ANN SY
INTERN DOMINIQUE DY



BY LUIS KATIGBAK

MAY 1967

"You killed my President, you rat!"

Those, reportedly, were the words Jack Ruby spat out as he gunned down Lee Harvey Oswald "in front of millions, old and young"—as cover designer George Lois puts it—during a live TV broadcast on November 24, 1963.

"Photographer Dick Richards and I showed the moment an all-American kid, mouth agape, mirroring the infamous victim on his black-and-white TV screen, started to grow up with live violence in his carpeted den, complete

with an all-American hamburger and a Coke."

Inside the issue were powerful pieces by Gary Wills and Ovid Demaris that afforded new insight into the motivations of Ruby, four years after the fact, accompanied by a dense three-page account of "46 Hours and 36 Minutes in the Life of Jack Ruby" rendered in comics form by none other than the legendary Jack Kirby: a brilliant coup on Esquire's part, and perhaps the perfect reinforcement of the cover theme.

The onscreen killing was seen at the time as a turning point that changed everything—the mass media, the national imagination—yet the notion seems almost quaint now. The children who witnessed it then are entering grandparenthood. Faces of Death-style footage is accessible everywhere. In an age when shock is seldom felt but self-righteous outrage is all too common, we are in danger of becoming a little more than jaded, and a little less than human. ■

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